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THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

I.

THE NABOB

VOL. I.

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

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THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

THE NABOB

TRANSLATED BY

GEORGE BURNHAM IVES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. ROSSI

BOSTON

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO FRENCH EDITION

We have been informed that at the time of the publication of *The Nabob* in serial form, the government of Tunis was offended at the introduction therein of individuals whom the author dressed in names and costumes peculiar to that country. We are authorized by M. Alphonse Daudet to declare that those scenes in the book which relate to Tunis are entirely imaginary, and that he never intended to introduce any of the functionaries of that state.

ALPHONSE DAUDET.

ALPHONSE DAUDET is one of the most richly gifted of modern French novelists and one of the most artistic; he is perhaps the most delightful; and he is certainly the most fortunate. In his own country earlier than any of his contemporaries he saw his stories attain to the very wide circulation that brings both celebrity and wealth. Beyond the borders of his own language he swiftly won a popularity both with the broad public and with the professed critics of literature, second only to that of Victor Hugo and still surpassing that of Balzac, who is only of late beginning to receive from us the attention he has so long deserved.

Daudet has had the rare luck of pleasing partisans of almost every school; the realists have joyed in his work and so have the romanticists; his writings have found favor in the eyes of the frank impressionists and also at the hands of the severer custodians of academic standards. Mr. Henry James has declared that Daudet is "at the head of his profession" and has called him "an admirable genius." Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson

thought Daudet "incomparably" the best of the present French novelists and asserted that "Kings in Exile" comes "very near to being a masterpiece." M. Jules Lemaitre tells us that Daudet "trails all hearts after him, — because he has charm, as indefinable in a work of art as in a woman's face." M. Ferdinand Brunetière, who has scant relish for latter-day methods in literature, admits ungrudgingly that "there are certain corners of the great city and certain aspects of Parisian manners, there are some physiognomies that perhaps no one has been able to render so well as Daudet, with that infinitely subtle and patient art which succeeds in giving even to inanimate things the appearance of life."

I.

The documents are abundant for an analysis of Daudet such as Sainte-Beuve would have undertaken with avidity; they are more abundant indeed than for any other contemporary French man of letters even in these days of unhesitating self-revelation; and they are also of an absolutely impregnable authenticity. M. Ernest Daudet has written a whole volume to tell us all about his brother's boyhood and youth and early manhood and first steps in literature. M. Léon Daudet has written another solid tome to tell us all about his father's literary principles and family life and later

years and death. Daudet himself put forth a pair of pleasant books of personal gossip about himself, narrating his relations with his fellow authors and recording the circumstances under which he came to compose each of his earlier stories. Montaigne — whose "Essays" was Daudet's bedside book and who may be accepted not unfairly as an authority upon egotism — assures us that "there is no description so difficult, nor doubtless of so great utility, as that of one's self." And Daudet's own interest in himself is not unlike Montaigne's, — it is open, innocent and illuminating.

Cuvier may have been able to reconstruct an extinct monster from the inspection of a single bone; but it is a harder task to revive the figure of a man, even by the aid of these family testimonies, this self-analysis, the diligence of countless interviewers of all nationalities, and indiscretion of a friend like Edmond de Goncourt (who seems to have acted on the theory that it is the whole duty of man to take notes of the talk of his fellows for prompt publication). Yet we have ample material to enable us to trace Daudet's heredity, and to estimate the influence of his environment in the days of his youth, and to allow for the effect which certain of his own physical peculiarities must have had upon his exercise of his art. His near-sightedness, for example, — would not Sainte-Beuve have seized upon this as significant? Would he not have seen in this a possible source of Daudet's mastery

of description? And the spasms of pain borne bravely and uncomplainingly, the long agony of his later years, what mark has this left on his work, how far is it responsible for a modification of his attitude, — for the change from the careless gaiety of "Tartarin of Tarascon" to the sombre satire of "Port-Tarascon"? What caused the joyous story-teller of the "Letters from my Mill" to develop into the bitter iconoclast of the "Immortal."

These questions are insistent; and yet, after all, what matters the answer to any of them? The fact remains that Daudet had his share of that incommunicable quality which we are agreed to call genius. This once admitted, we may do our best to weigh it and to resolve it into its elements, it is at bottom the vital spark that resists all examination, however scientific we may seek to be. We can test for this and for that, but in the final analysis genius is inexplicable. It is what it is, because it is. It might have been different, no doubt, but it is not. It is its own excuse for being; and, for all that we can say to the contrary, it is its own cause, sufficient unto itself. Even if we had Sainte-Beuve's scalpel, we could not surprise the secret.

Yet an inquiry into the successive stages of Daudet's career, a consideration of his ancestry, of his parentage, of his birth, of the circumstances of his boyhood, of his youthful adventures, — these things are interesting in themselves and they are

not without instruction. They reveal to us the reasons for the transformation that goes so far to explain Daudet's peculiar position, — the transformation of a young Provençal poet into a brilliant Parisian veritist. Daudet was a Provençal who became a Parisian, — and in this translation we may find the key to his character as a writer of fiction.

He was from Provence as Maupassant was from Normandy; and Daudet had the Southern expansiveness and abundance, just as Maupassant had the Northern reserve and caution. If an author is ever to bring forth fruit after his kind he must have roots in the soil of his nativity. Daudet was no orchid, beautiful and scentless; his writings have always the full flavor of the southern soil. He was able to set Tartarin before us so sympathetically and to make Numa Roumestan so convincing because he recognized in himself the possibility of a like exuberance. He could never take the rigorously impassive attitude which Flaubert taught Maupassant to assume. Daudet not only feels for his characters, but he is quite willing that we should be aware of his compassion.

He is not only incapable of the girding enmity which Taine detected and detested in Thackeray's treatment of Becky Sharp, but he is also devoid of the callous detachment with which Flaubert dissected Emma Bovary under the microscope. Daudet is never flagrantly hostile toward one of his creatures; and, however contemptible or despi-

cable the characters he has called into being, he is scrupulously fair to them. Sidonie and Félicia Ruys severally throw themselves away, but Daudet is never intolerant. He is inexorable, but he is not insulting. I cannot but think that it is Provence whence Daudet derived the precious birthright of sympathy, and that it is Provence again which bestowed on him the rarer gift of sentiment. It is by his possession of sympathy and of sentiment that he has escaped the aridity which suffocates us in the works of so many other Parisian novelists. The South endowed him with warmth and heartiness and vivacity; and what he learnt from Paris was the power of self-restraint and the duty of finish.

He was born in Provence and he died in Paris; he began as a poet and he ended as a veritist; and in each case there was logical evolution and not contradiction. The Parisian did not cease to be a Provençal; and the novelist was a lyrist still. Poet though he was, he had an intense liking for the actual, the visible, the tangible. He so hungered after truth that he was ready sometimes to stay his stomach with facts in its stead, — mere fact being but the outward husk, whereas truth is the rich kernel concealed within. His son tells us that Daudet might have taken as a motto the title of Goethe's autobiography, "Dichtung und Wahrheit," — Poetry and Truth. And this it is that has set Daudet apart and that has caused his vogue with readers of all sorts and conditions, — this unique combination of imagination and verity. "His

originality," M. Jules Lemaitre has acutely remarked, "is closely to unite observation and fantasy, to extract from the truth all that it contains of the improbable and the surprising, to satisfy at the same time the readers of M. Cherbuliez and the readers of M. Zola, to write novels which are at the same time realistic and romantic, and which seem romantic only because they are very sincerely and very profoundly realistic."

II.

ALPHONSE DAUDET was born in 1840, and it was at Nîmes that he first began to observe mankind; and he has described his birthplace and his boyhood in "Little What's-his-name," a novel even richer in autobiographical revelation than is "David Copperfield." His father was a manufacturer whose business was not prosperous and who was forced at last to remove with the whole family to Lyons in the vain hope of doing better in the larger town. After reading the account of this parent's peculiarities in M. Ernest Daudet's book, we are not surprised that the affairs of the family did not improve, but went from bad to worse. Alphonse Daudet suffered bitterly in these years of desperate struggle, but he gained an understanding of the conditions of mercantile life, to be serviceable later in the composition of "Fromont and Risler."

When he was sixteen he secured a place as *pion* in a boarding school in the Cévennes, — a *pion* is a poor devil of a youth hired to keep watch on the boys. How painful this position was to the young poet can be read indirectly in "Little What's-his-name," but more explicitly in the history of that story, printed now in "Thirty Years of Paris." From this remote prison he was rescued by his elder brother, Ernest, who was trying to make his way in Paris and who sent for Alphonse as soon as he had been engaged to help an old gentleman in writing his memoirs. The younger brother has described his arrival in Paris, and his first dress-coat and his earliest literary acquaintances. Ernest's salary was seventy-five francs a month, and on this the two brothers managed to live; no doubt fifteen dollars went further in Paris in 1857 than they will in 1899.

In those days of privation and ambition Daudet's longing was to make himself famous as a poet; and when at last, not yet twenty years old, he began his career as a man of letters it was by the publication of a volume of verse, just as his fellow-novelists, M. Paul Bourget and Signor Gabriele d'Annunzio have severally done. Immature as juvenile lyrics are likely to be, these early rhymes of Daudet's have a flavor of their own, a faintly recognizable note of individuality. He is more naturally a poet than most modern literators who possess the accomplishment of verse as part of their equipment for the literary life, but who lack a spontaneous

impulse toward rhythm. It may even be suggested that his little poems are less artificial than most French verse; they are the result of a less obvious effort. He lisped in numbers; and with him it was rather prose that had to be consciously acquired. His lyric note, although not keen and not deep, is heard again and again in his novels, and it sustains some of the most graceful and tender of his short stories, — "The Death of the Dauphin," for instance, and the "Sous-préfet in the Fields."

Daudet extended poetry to include playmaking; and alone or with a friend he attempted more than one little piece in rhyme — tiny plays of a type familiar enough at the Odéon. He has told us how the news of the production of one of these poetic dramas came to him afar in Algiers whither he had been sent because of a weakness of the lungs, threatening to become worse in the gray Parisian winter. Other plays of his, some of them far more important than this early effort, were produced in the next few years. The most ambitious of these was the "Woman of Arles," which he had elaborated from a touching short story and for which Bizet composed incidental music as beautiful and as overwhelming as that prepared by Mendelssohn for the "Midsummer Night's Dream."

No one of Daudet's dramatic attempts was really successful; not the "Woman of Arles," which is less moving in the theatre than in its briefer narrative form, not even the latest of them all, the

freshest and the most vigorous, the "Struggle for Life," with its sinister figure of Paul Astier taken over from the "Immortal." Apparently, with all his desire to write for the stage, Daudet must have been inadequately endowed with the dramaturgic faculty, that special gift of playmaking which many a poet lacks and many a novelist, but which the humblest playwright must needs have and which all the great dramatists have possessed abundantly in addition to their poetic power.

Perhaps it was the unfavorable reception of his successive dramas which is responsible for the chief of Daudet's lapses from the kindliness with which he treats the characters that people his stories. He seems to have kept hot a grudge against the theatre: and he relieves his feelings by taking it out of the stage-folk he introduces into his novels. To actors and actresses he is intolerant and harsh. What is factitious and self-overvaluing in the Provençal type, he understood and he found it easy to pardon; but what was factitious and self-overvaluing in the player type, he would not understand and he refused to pardon. And here he shows in strong contrast with a successful dramatist, M. Ludovic Halévy, whose knowledge of the histrionic temperament is at least as wide as Daudet's and whose humor is as keen, but whose judgment is softened by the grateful memory of many victories won by the united effort of the author and the actor.

Through his brother's influence, Alphonse Daudet

was appointed by the Duke de Morny to a semi-sinecure; and he has recorded how he told his benefactor before accepting the place that he was a Legitimist and how the Duke smilingly retorted that the Empress was also. Although it was as a poet that Daudet made his bow in the world of letters, his first appearance as a dramatist was not long delayed thereafter; and he soon came forward also as a journalist, — or rather as a contributor to the papers. While many of the articles he prepared for the daily and weekly press were of ephemeral interest only, as the necessity of journalism demands, to be forgotten forty-eight hours after they were printed, not a few of them were sketches having more than a temporary value. Parisian newspapers are more hospitable to literature than are the newspapers of New York or of London; and a goodly proportion of the young Southerner's journalistic writing proved worthy of preservation.

It has been preserved for us in three volumes of short stories and sketches, of fantasies and impressions. Not all the contents of the "Letters from my Mill," of the "Monday Tales" and of "Artists' Wives," as we have these collections now, were written in these early years of Daudet's Parisian career, but many of them saw the light before 1870, and what has been added since conforms in method to the work of his 'prentice days. No doubt the war with Prussia enlarged his outlook on life; and there is more depth in the satires this conflict suggested and more pathos

in the pictures it evoked. The "Last Lesson," for example, that simple vision of the old French schoolmaster taking leave of his Alsatian pupils, has a symbolic breath not easy to match in the livelier tales written before the surrender at Sédan; and in the "Siege of Berlin" there is a vibrant patriotism far more poignant than we can discover in any of the playful apologues published before the war. He had had an inside view of the Second Empire, he could not help seeing its hollowness, and he revolted against the selfishness of its servants; no single chapter of M. Zola's splendid and terrible "Downfall" contains a more damning indictment of the leaders o the imperial army than is to be read in Daudet's "Game of Billiards"

The short story, whether in prose or in verse, is a literary form in which the French have ever displayed an easy mastery; and from Daudet's three volumes it would not be difficult to select half-a-dozen little masterpieces. The Provençal tales lack only rhymes to stand confessed as poesy; and many a reader may prefer these first flights before Daudet set his Pegasus to toil in the mill of realism. The "Pope's Mule," for instance, is not this a marvel of blended humor and fantasy? And the "Elixir of Father Gaucher," what could be more naïvely ironic? Like a true Southerner, Daudet delights in girding at the Church; and these tales bristle with jibes at ecclesiastical dignitaries; but his stroke is never

malignant and there is no barb to his shaft nor poison on the tip.

Scarcely inferior to the war-stories or to the Provençal sketches are certain vignettes of the capital, swift silhouettes of Paris, glimpsed by an unforgetting eye, the "Last Book," for one, in which an unlovely character is treated with kindly contempt; and for another, the "Book-keeper," the most Dickens-like of Daudet's shorter pieces, yet having a literary modesty Dickens never attained. The alleged imitation of the British novelist by the French may be left for later consideration; but it is possible now to note that in the earlier descriptive chapters of the "Letters from my Mill" one may detect a certain similarity of treatment and attitude, not to Dickens but to two of the masters on whom Dickens modelled himself, Goldsmith and Irving. The scene in the diligence, when the baker gently pokes fun at the poor fellow whose wife is intermittent in her fidelity, is quite in the manner of the "Sketch Book."

There is the same freshness and fertility in the collection called "Artists' Wives" as in the "Letters from my Mill," and the "Monday Tales," but not the same playfulness and fun. They are severe studies, all of them; and they all illustrate the truth of Bagehot's saying that a man's mother might be his misfortune, but his wife was his fault. It is a rosary of marital infelicities that Daudet has strung for us in this vol-

ume, and in every one of them the husband is expiating his blunder. With ingenious variety the author rings the changes on one theme, on the sufferings of the ill-mated poet or painter or sculptor, despoiled of the sympathy he craves, and shackled even in the exercise of his art. And the picture is not out of drawing, for Daudet can see the wife's side of the case also; he can appreciate her bewilderment at the ugly duckling whom it is so difficult for her to keep in the nest. The women have made shipwreck of their lives too, and they are companions in misery, if not helpmeets in understanding. This is perhaps the saddest of all Daudet's books, the least relieved by humor, the most devoid of the gaiety which illumines the "Letters from my Mill" and the first and second "Tartarin" volumes. But it is also one of the most veracious; it is life itself firmly grasped and honestly presented.

It is not matrimonial incongruity at large in all its shifting aspects that Daudet here considers; it is only the married unhappiness of the artist, whatever his mode of expression, and whichever of the muses he has chosen to serve; it is only the wedded life of the man incessantly in search of the ideal, and never relaxing in the strain of his struggle with the inflexible material from which he must shape his vision of existence. Not only in this book, but in many another has Daudet shown that he perceives the needs of the artistic temperament, its demands, its limitations

and its characteristics. There is a playwright in "Rose and Ninette;" there is a painter in the "Immortal;" there is an actor in "Fromont and Risler;" there are a sculptor, a poet, and a novelist on the roll of the heroine's lovers in "Sapho." Daudet handles them gently always, unless they happen to belong to the theatre. Toward the stage-folk he is pitiless; for all other artists he has abundant appreciation; he is not blind to their little weaknesses, but these he can forgive even though he refuses to forget; he is at home with them. He is never patronizing, as Thackeray is, who also knows them and loves them. Thackeray's attitude is that of a gentleman born to good society, but glad to visit Bohemia, because he can speak the language; Daudet's is that of a man of letters who thinks that his fellow-artists are really the best society.

III.

Not with pictures of artists at home did Daudet conquer his commanding position in literature, not with short stories, not with plays, not with verses. These had served to make him known to the inner circle of lovers of literature who are quick to appreciate whatever is at once new and true; but they did not help him to break through the crust and to reach the hearts of the broad body of readers who care little for the

delicacies of the season, but must ever be fed on strong meat. When the latest of the three volumes of short stories was published, and when the "Woman of Arles" was produced, the transformation was complete: the poet had developed into a veritist, without ceasing to be a poet, and the Provençal had become a Parisian. His wander-years were at an end, and he had made a happy marriage. Lucky in the risky adventure of matrimony, as in so many others, he chanced upon a woman who was congenial, intelligent and devoted, and who became almost a collaborator in all his subsequent works.

His art was ready for a larger effort; it was ripe for a richer fruitage. Already had he made more than one attempt at a long story, but this was before his powers had matured, and before he had come to a full knowedge of himself. "Little What 's-his-name," as he himself has confessed, lacks perspective; it was composed too soon after the personal experiences out of which it was made, — before Time had put the scenes in proper proportion and before his hand was firm in its stroke. "Robert Helmont" is the journal of an observer who happens also to be a poet and a patriot; but it has scarcely substance enough to warrant calling it a story. Much of the material used in the making of these books was very good indeed; but the handling was a little uncertain, and the result is not quite satisfactory, charming as both of them are, with the seductive grace

which is Daudet's birthright and his trademark. In his brief tales he had shown that he had the story-telling faculty, the ability to project character, the gift of arousing interest; but it remained for him to prove that he possessed also the main strength requisite to carry him through the long labor of a full-grown novel. It is not by gentle stories like "Robert Helmont" and "Little What's-his-name" that a novelist is promoted to the front rank; and after he had written these two books he remained where he was before, in the position of a promising young author.

The promise was fulfilled by the publication of "Fromont and Risler," — not the best of his novels, but the earliest in which his full force was displayed. Daudet has told us how this was planned originally as a play, how the failure of the "Woman of Arles" led him to relinquish the dramatic form, and how the supposed necessities of the stage warped the logical structure of the story, turning upon the intrigues of the young wife the interest which should have been concentrated upon the partnership, the business rivalry, the mercantile integrity, whence the novel derived its novelty. The falsifying habit of thrusting marital infidelity into the foreground of fiction when the theme itself seems almost to exclude any dwelling on amorous misadventure, Daudet yielded to only this once; and this is one reason why a truer view of Parisian life can be found in his pages than in those of any of his competitors,

and why his works are far less monotonous than theirs.

He is not squeamish, as every reader of "Sapho" can bear witness; but he does not wantonly choose a vulgar adultery as the staple of his stories. French fiction, ever since the tale of "Tristan and Yseult" was first told, has tended to be a poem of love triumphant over every obstacle, even over honor; and Daudet is a Frenchman with French ideas about woman and love and marriage; he is not without his share of Gallic salt; but he is too keen an observer not to see that there are other things in life than illicit woo-ings, — business, for example, and politics, and religion, — important factors all of them in our complicated modern existence. At the root of him Daudet had a steadfast desire to see life as a whole and to tell the truth about it unhesitatingly; and this is a characteristic he shares only with the great masters of fiction, — essentially veracious, every one of them.

Probably Dickens, frequently as he wrenched the facts of life into conformity with his rather primitive artistic code, believed that he also was telling the truth. It is in Daudet's paper explaining how he came to write "Fromont and Risler" that he discusses the accusation that he was an imitator of Dickens, — an accusation which seems absurd enough now that the careers of both writers are closed, and that we can compare their complete works. Daudet re-

cords that the charge was brought against him very early, long before he had read Dickens, and he explains that any likeness that may exist is due not to copying but to kinship of spirit. "I have deep in my heart," he says, "the same love Dickens has for the maimed and the poor, for the children brought up in all the deprivation of great cities." This pity for the disinherited, for those that have had no chance in life, is not the only similarity between the British novelist and the French; there is also the peculiar combination of sentiment and humor. Daudet is not so bold as Dickens, not so robust, not so overmastering; but he is far more discreet, far truer to nature, far finer in his art; he does not let his humor carry him into caricature, nor his sentiment slop over into sentimentality.

Even the minor French novelists strive for beauty of form, and would be ashamed of the fortuitous scaffolding that satisfies the British story-tellers. A eulogist of Dickens, Mr. George Gissing, has recently remarked acutely that "Daudet has a great advantage in his mastery of construction. Where, as in 'Fromont and Risler,' he constructs too well, that is to say, on the stage model, we see what a gain it was to him to have before his eyes the Paris stage of the Second Empire, instead of that of London in the earlier Victorian time." Where Dickens emulated the farces and the melodramas of forgotten British playwrights, Daudet was influenced rather by the

virile dramas of Dumas *fils* and Augier. But in "Fromont and Risler," not only is the plot a trifle stagy, but the heroine herself seems almost a refugee of the footlights; exquisitely presented as Sidonie is, she fails quite to captivate or convince, perhaps because her sisters have been seen so often before in this play and in that. And now and again even in his later novels we discover that Daudet has needlessly achieved the adroit arrangement of events so useful in the theatre and not requisite in the library. In "The Nabob," for example, it is the "long arm of coincidence" that brings Paul de Géry to the inn on the Riviera, and to the very next room therein at the exact moment when Jenkins catches up with the fleeing Félicia.

Yet these lapses into the arbitrary are infrequent after all; and as "Fromont and Risler" was followed first by one and then by another novel, the evil influence of theatrical conventionalism disappears. Daudet occasionally permits himself an underplot; but he acts always on the principle he once formulated to his son: "every book is an organism; if it has not its organs in place, it dies, and its corpse is a scandal." Sometimes, as in "Fromont and Risler," he starts at the moment when the plot thickens, returning soon to make clear the antecedents of the characters first shown in action; and sometimes, as in "Sapho," he begins right at the beginning and goes straight through to the end. But, whatever his method,

there is never any doubt as to the theme; and the essential unity is always apparent. This severity of design in no way limits the variety of the successive acts of his drama.

While a novel of Balzac's is often no more than an analysis of character, and while a novel of Zola's is a massive epic of human endeavor, a novel of Daudet's is a gallery of pictures, brushed in with the sweep and certainty of a master-hand, — portraits, landscapes with figures, marines, battle-pieces, bits of *genre*, views of Paris. And the views of Paris outnumber the others, and almost outvalue them also. Mr. Henry James has noted that "The Nabob" is "full of episodes which are above all pages of execution, triumphs of translation. The author has drawn up a list of the Parisian solemnities, and painted the portrait, or given a summary, of each of them. The opening day at the Salon, a funeral at Père la Chaise, a debate in the Chamber of Deputies, the *première* of a new play at a favorite theatre, furnish him with so many opportunities for his gymnastics of observation." And "The Nabob" is only a little more richly decorated than the "Immortal," and "Numa Roumestan," and "Kings in Exile."

These pictures, these carefully wrought masterpieces of rendering are not lugged in, each for its own sake; they are not outside of the narrative; they are actually part of the substance of the story. Daudet excels in describing, and every artist is prone to abound in the sense of his supe-

riority. As the French saying puts it, a man has always the defects of his qualities; yet Daudet rarely obtrudes his descriptions, and he generally uses them to explain character and to set off or bring out the moods of his personages. They are so swift that I am tempted to call them flash-lights; but photographic is just what they are not, for they are artistic in their vigorous suppression of the unessentials; they are never gray or cold or hard; they vibrate with color and tingle with emotion.

And just as a painter keeps filling his sketch-books with graphic hints for elaboration later, so Daudet was indefatigable in note-taking. He explains his method in his paper of "Fromont and Risler;" how he had for a score of years made a practice of jotting down in little note-books not only his remarks and his thoughts, but also a rapid record of what he had heard with his ears ever on the alert, and what he had seen with those tireless eyes of his. Yet he never let the dust of these note-books choke the life out of him. Every one of his novels was founded on fact, — plot, incidents, characters and scenery.

He used his imagination to help him to see; he used it also to peer into and behind the mere facts. All that he needed to invent was a connecting link now and again; and it may as well be admitted at once that these mere inventions are sometimes the least satisfactory part of his stories. The two young men in "The Nabob," for

instance, whom Mr. Henry James found it difficult to tell apart, the sculptor-painter in the "Immortal," the occasional other characters which we discover to be made up, lack the individuality and the vitality of figures taken from real life by a sympathetic effort of interpretative imagination. Delobelle, Gardinois, "all the personages of 'Fromont' have lived," Daudet declares; and he adds a regret that in depicting old Gardinois he gave pain to one he loved, but he "could not suppress this type of egotist, aged and terrible."

Since the beginning of the art of story-telling, the narrators must have gone to actuality to get suggestions for their character-drawing; and nothing is commoner than the accusation that this or that novelist has stolen his characters ready-made, — filching them from nature's shop-window, without so much as a by-your-leave. Daudet is bold in committing these larcenies from life and frank in confessing them, — far franker than Dickens, who tried to squirm out of the charge that he had put Landor and Leigh Hunt unfairly into fiction. Perhaps Dickens was bolder than Daudet, if it is true that he drew Micawber from his own father, and Mrs. Nickleby from his own mother. Daudet was taxed with ingratitude that he had used as the model of Mora, the Duke de Morny, who had befriended him; and he defended himself by declaring that he thought the duke would find no fault with the way Mora had been presented. But a great

artist has never copied his models slavishly; he has utilized them in the effort to realize to his own satisfaction what he has already imagined. Daudet maintained to his son that those who were without imagination cannot even observe accurately. Invention alone, mere invention, an inferior form of mental exercise, suffices to provide a pretty fair romantic tale, remote from the facts of every-day life, but only true imagination can sustain a realistic novel where every reader's experience qualifies him to check off the author's progress, step by step.

IV.

It would take too long — although the task would be amusing — to call the roll of Daudet's novels written after "Fromont and Risler" had revealed to him his own powers, and to discuss what fact of Parisian history had been the starting point of each of them and what notabilities of Paris had sat for each of the chief characters. Mr. Henry James, for instance, has seen it suggested that Félicia Ruys is intended as a portrait of Mme. Sarah-Bernhardt; M. Zola, on the other hand, denies that Félicia Ruys is Mme. Sarah-Bernhardt and hints that she is rather Mme. Judith Gautier. Daudet himself refers to the equally absurd report that Gambetta was the original of Numa Roumestan, — a report over which

the alleged subject and the real author laughed together. Daudet's own attitude toward his creations is a little ambiguous or at least a little inconsistent; in one paper he asserts that every character of his has had a living original, and in another he admits that Elysée Méraut, for example, is only in part a certain Thérion.

The admission is more nearly exact than the assertion. Every novelist whose work is to endure even for a generation must draw from life, sometimes generalizing broadly and sometimes keeping close to the single individual, but always free to modify the mere fact as he may have observed it to conform with the larger truth of the fable he shall devise. Most story-tellers tend to generalize, and their fictions lack the sharpness of outline we find in nature. Daudet prefers to retain as much of the actual individual as he dares without endangering the web of his composition; and often the transformation is very slight,— Mora, for instance, who is probably a close copy of Morny, but who stands on his own feet in "The Nabob," and lives his own life as independently as though he was a sheer imagination. More rarely the result is not so satisfactory; J. Tom Lévis, for example, for whose authenticity the author vouches, but who seems out of place in "Kings in Exile," like a fantastic invention, such as Balzac sometimes permitted himself as a relief from his rigorous realism.

For incident as well as for character Daudet

goes to real life. The escape of Colette from under the eyes of her father-in-law, — that actually happened; but none the less does it fit into "Kings in Exile." And Colette's cutting off her hair in grief at her husband's death, — that actually happened also; but it belongs artistically in the "Immortal." On the other hand, the fact which served as the foundation of the "Immortal" — the taking in of a *savant* by a lot of forged manuscripts — has been falsified by changing the *savant* from a mathematician (who might easily be deceived about a matter of autographs) to a historian (whose duty it is to apply all known tests of genuineness to papers purporting to shed new light on the past). This borrowing from the newspaper has its evident advantages, but it has its dangers also, even in the hands of a poet as adroit as Daudet and as imaginative. Perhaps the story of his which is most artistic in its telling, most shapely, most harmonious in its modulations of a single theme to the inevitable end, developed without haste and without rest, is "Sapho;" and "Sapho" is the novel of Daudet's in which there seems to be the least of this stencilling of actual fact, in which the generalization is the broadest, and in which the observation is least restricted to single individuals.

But in "Sapho" the theme itself is narrow, narrower than in "Numa Roumestan," and far narrower than in either "The Nabob" or "Kings

in Exile;" and this is why "Sapho," fine as it is, and subtle, is perhaps less satisfactory. No other French novelist of the final half of the nineteenth century, not Flaubert, not Goncourt, not M. Zola, not Maupassant, has four novels as solid as these, as varied in incident, as full of life, as rich in character, as true. They form the quadrilateral wherein Daudet's fame is secure.

"Sapho" is a daughter of the "Lady of the Camellias," and a grand-daughter of "Manon Lescaut," — Frenchwomen, all of them, and of a class French authors have greatly affected. But Daudet's book is not a specimen of what Lowell called "that *corps-de-ballet* literature in which the most animal of the passions is made more temptingly naked by a veil of French gauze." It is at bottom a moral book, much as "Tom Jones" is moral. Fielding's novel is English, robust, hearty, brutal in a way, and its morality is none too lofty. Daudet's is French, softer, more enervating, and with an almost complacent dwelling on the sins of the flesh. But neither Fielding nor Daudet is guilty of sentimentality, the one unforgivable crime in art. In his treatment of the relation of the sexes Daudet was above all things truthful; his veracity is inexorable. He shows how man is selfish in love and woman also, and how the egotism of the one is not as the egotism of the other. He shows how Fanny Legrand slangs her lover with the foul language of the gutter whence she sprang, and how Jean when he

strikes back, refrains from foul blows. He shows how Jean, weak of will as he was, gets rid of the millstone about his neck, only because of the weariness of the woman to whom he has bound himself. He shows us the various aspects of the love which is not founded on esteem, the Héttema couple, De Potter and Rose, Déchelette and Alice Doré, all to set off the sorry idyl of Fanny and Jean.

In "Numa Roumestan" there is a larger vision of life than in "Sapho," even if there is no deeper insight. The construction is almost as severe; and the movement is unbroken from beginning to end, without excursus or digression. The central figure is masterly, — the kindly and selfish Southerner, easy-going and soft-spoken, an orator who is so eloquent that he can even convince himself, a politician who thinks only when he is talking, a husband who loves his wife as profoundly as he can love anybody except himself, and who loves his wife more than his temporary mistress, even during the days of his dalliance. Numa is a native of the South of France, as was Daudet himself; and it is out of the fulness of knowledge that the author evolves the character, brushing in the portrait with bold strokes and unceasingly adding caressing touches till the man actually lives and moves before our eyes. The veracity of the picture is destroyed by no final inconsistency. What Numa is, Numa will be. Daudet never descends at the end of

his novels like a god from the machine to change character in the twinkling of an eye, and to convert bad men to good thoughts and good deeds.

He can give us goodness when he chooses, a human goodness, not offensively perfect, not preaching, not mawkish, but high-minded and engaging. There are two such types in "Kings in Exile," the Queen and Elysée Méraut, essentially honest both of them, thinking little of self, and sustained by lofty purpose. Naturalistic novelists generally (and M. Zola in particular), live in a black world peopled mainly by fools and knaves; from this blunder Daudet is saved by his Southern temperament, by his lyric fervor, and, at bottom, by his wisdom. He knows better; he knows that while a weak creature like Christian II. is common, a resolute soul like Frédérique is not so very rare. He knows that the contrast and the clash of these characters is interesting matter for the novelist. And no novelist has had a happier inspiration than that which gave us "Kings in Exile," a splendid subject, splendidly handled, and lending itself perfectly to the display of Daudet's best qualities, his poetry, his ability to seize the actual, and his power of dealing with material such as the elder Dumas would have delighted in with a restraint and a logic the younger Dumas would have admired. Plot and counter-plot, bravery, treachery, death, — these are elements for a romanticist farrago; and in

Daudet's hands they are woven into a tapestry almost as stiff as life itself. The stuff is romantic enough, but the treatment is unhesitatingly realistic; and "Kings in Exile," better than any other novel of Daudet's, explains his vogue with readers of the most divergent tastes.

In "The Nabob," the romantic element is slighter than in "Kings in Exile;" the subject is not so striking; and the movement of the story is less straightforward. But what a panorama of Paris it is that he unrolls before us in this story of a luckless adventurer in the city of luxury then under the control of the imperial band of brigands! No doubt the Joyeuse family is an obtrusion and an artistic blemish, since they do not logically belong in the scheme of the story; and yet they (and their fellows in other books of Daudet's) testify to his effort to get the truth and the whole truth into his picture of Paris life. Mora and Félicia Ruys and Jenkins, these are the obverse of the medal, exposed in the shop-windows that every passer-by can see. The Joyeuse girls and their father are the reverse, to be viewed only by those who take the trouble to look at the under side of things. They are samples of the simple, gentle, honest folk, of whom there must be countless thousands in France and even in its capital, but who fail to interest most French novelists just because they are not eccentric or wicked or ugly. Of a truth, Aline Joyeuse is as typically Parisian as Félicia Ruys herself; both

are needed if the census is to be complete; and the omission of either is a source of error.

There is irony in Daudet's handling of these humbler figures, but it is compassionate and almost affectionate. If he laughs at Father Joyeuse there is no harshness and no hostility in his mirth. For the Joyeuse daughters he has indulgence and pity; and his humor plays about them and leaves them scart-free. It never stings them or scorches or sears, as it does Astier-Réhu and Christian II. and the Prince of Axel, in spite of his desire to be fair toward all the creatures of his brain.

Irony is only one of the manifestations of Daudet's humor. Wit he has also, and satire. And he is doubly fortunate in that he has both humor and the sense-of-humor — the positive and the negative. It is the sense-of-humor, so called, that many humorists are without, a deprivation which allows them to take themselves so seriously that they become a laughing-stock for the world. It is the sense-of-humor that makes the master of comedy, that helps him to see things in due proportion and perspective, that keeps him from exaggeration and emphasis, from sentimentality and melodrama and bathos. It is the sense-of-humor that prevents our making fools of ourselves; it is humor itself that softens our laughter at those who make themselves ridiculous. In his serious stories Daudet employs this negative humor chiefly, as though he had in

memory La Bruyère's assertion that "he who makes us laugh rarely is able to win esteem for himself." His positive humor, — gay, exuberant, contagious, — finds its full field for display in some of the short stories, and more especially in the Tartarin series.

Has any book of our time caused more laughter than "Tartarin of Tarascon" — unless it be "Tartarin on the Alps"? I can think only of one rival pair, "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn," — for Mark Twain and Alphonse Daudet both achieved the almost impossible feat of writing a successful sequel to a successful book, of forcing fortune to a repetition of a happy accident. The abundant laughter the French humorist excited is like that evoked by the American humorist, — clean, hearty, healthy, self-respecting; it is in both cases what George Eliot in one of her letters called "the exquisite laughter that comes from a gratification of the reasoning faculty." Daudet and Mark Twain are imaginative realists; their most amusing extravagance is but an exaggeration of the real thing; and they never let factitious fantasy sweep their feet off the ground. Tartarin is as typical of Provence as Colonel Sellers — to take that figure of Mark Twain's which is most like — is typical of the Mississippi Valley.

Tartarin is as true as Numa Roumestan; in fact they may almost be said to be sketched from the same model but in a very different temper.

In "Numa Roumestan" we are shown the sober side of the Southern temperament, the sorrow it brings in the house though it displays joy in the street; and in "Tartarin" we behold only the immense comicality of the incessant incongruity between the word and the deed. Tartarin is Southern, it is true, and French; but he is very human also. There is a boaster and a liar in most of us, lying in wait for a chance to rush out and put us to shame. It is this universality of Daudet's satire that has given Tartarin its vogue on both sides of the Atlantic. The ingenuity of Tartarin's misadventures, the variety of them in Algiers and in Switzerland, the obvious reasonableness of them all, the delightful probability of these impossibilities, the frank gaiety and the unflagging high spirits, — these are precious qualities, all of them; but it is rather the essential humanness of Tartarin himself that has given him a reputation throughout the world. Very rarely indeed now or in the past has an author been lucky enough to add a single figure to the cosmopolitan gallery of fiction. Cervantes, De Foe, Swift, Le Sage, Dumas, have done it; Fielding and Hawthorne and Turgenef have not.

It is no wonder that Daudet takes pride in this. The real joy of the novelist, he declares, is to create human beings, to put on their feet types of humanity who thereafter circulate through the world with the name, the gesture, the grimace he has given them and who are cited and talked

about without reference to their creator and without even any mention of him. And whenever Daudet heard some puppet of politics or literature called a Tartarin, a shiver ran through him — "the shiver of pride of a father, hidden in the crowd that is applauding his son and wanting all the time to cry out 'That 's my boy!'"

V.

THE time has not yet come for a final estimate of Daudet's position, — if a time ever arrives when any estimate can be final. But already has a selection been made of the masterpieces which survive, and from which an author is judged by the next generation that will have time to criticise only the most famous of the works this generation leaves behind it. We can see also that much of Daudet's later writing is slight and not up to his own high standard, although even his briefest trifle had always something of his charm, of his magic, of his seductive grace. We can see how rare an endowment he has when we note that he is an acute observer of mankind, and yet without any taint of misanthropy, and that he combines fidelity of reproduction with poetic elevation.

He is — to say once more what has already been said in these pages more than once — he is a lover of romance with an unfaltering respect for

reality. We all meet with strange experiences once in our lives, with "things you could put in a story," as the phrase is; but we none of us have hairbreadth escapes every morning before breakfast. The romantic is as natural as anything else; it is the excess of the romantic which is in bad taste. It is the piling up of the agony which is disgusting. It is the accumulation upon one impossible hero of many exceptional adventures which is untrue and therefore immoral. Daudet's most individual peculiarity was his skill in seizing the romantic aspects of the commonplace. In one of his talks with his son he said that a novelist must beware of an excess of lyric enthusiasm; he himself sought for emotion, and emotion escaped when human proportions were exceeded. Balance, order, reserve, symmetry, sobriety, — these are the qualities he was ever praising. The real, the truthful, the sincere, — this is what he sought always to attain.

Daudet may lack the poignant intensity of Balzac, the lyric sweep of Hugo, the immense architectural strength of M. Zola, the implacable disinterestedness of Flaubert, the marvellous concentration of Maupassant, but he has more humor than any of them and more charm, — more sympathy than any but Hugo, and more sincerity than any but Flaubert. His is perhaps a rarer combination than any of theirs, — the gift of story-telling, the power of character-drawing, the grasp of emotional situation, the faculty of analy-

sis, the feeling for form, the sense of style, an unfailing and humane interest in his fellow-men, and an irresistible desire to tell the truth about life as he saw it with his own eyes.

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

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THE NABOB.

A HUNDRED years ago Le Sage wrote these words at the head of *Gil Blas:*

"As there are persons who cannot read a book without making personal application of the vicious or absurd characters they find therein, I hereby declare for the benefit of such evil-minded readers that they will err in making such application of the portraits in this book. I make public avowal that my only aim has been to represent the life of mankind as it is."

Without attempting to draw any comparison between Le Sage's novel and my own, I may say that I should have liked to place a declaration of the same nature on the first page of *The Nabob*, at the time of its publication. Several reasons prevented my doing so. In the first place, the fear that such an advertisement might seem too much like a bait thrown out to the public, an attempt to compel its attention. Secondly, I was far from suspecting that a book written with a purely literary purpose could acquire at a bound such anecdotal importance, and bring down upon me such a buzzing swarm of complaints. Indeed, such

a thing was never seen before. Not a line of my work, not one of its heroes, not even a character of secondary importance, but has become a pretext for allusions and protestations. To no purpose does the author deny the imputation, swear by all the gods that there is no key to his novel — every one forges at least one, with whose assistance he claims to open that combination lock. It must be that all these types have lived, bless my soul! that they live to-day, exactly identical from head to foot. Monpavon is So-and-So, is he not? Jenkins' resemblance is striking. One man is angry because he is in it, another one because he is not in it; and, beginning with this eagerness for scandal, there is nothing, not even chance similarities of name, fatal in the modern novel, descriptions of streets, numbers of houses selected at random, that has not served to give identity to beings built of a thousand pieces and, moreover, absolutely imaginary.

The author is too modest to take all this outcry to himself. He knows how great a part the friendly or treacherous indiscretions of the newspapers have had therein; and without thanking the former more than is seemly, without too great ill-will to the latter, he resigns himself to the stormy prospect as something inevitable, and simply deems himself in duty bound to affirm that he has never, in twenty years of upright, literary toil, resorted to that element of success, neither on this occasion nor on any other. As he turned the leaves of his memory, which it is every novelist's right and duty to do, he recalled a

strange episode that occurred in cosmopolitan Paris some fifteen years ago. The romance of a dazzling career that shot swiftly across the Parisian sky like a meteor evidently served as the frame-work of *The Nabob*, a picture of manners and morals at the close of the Second Empire. But around that central situation and certain well-known incidents, which it was every one's right to study and revive, what a world of fancy, what inventions, what elaboration, and, above all, what an outlay of that incessant, universal, almost unconscious observation, without which there could be no imaginative writers. Furthermore, to obtain an idea of the "crystallizing" labor involved in transporting the simplest circumstances from reality to fiction, from life to romance, one need only open the *Moniteur Officiel* of February, 1864, and compare a certain session of the Corps Législatif with the picture that I give of it in my book. Who could have supposed that, after the lapse of so many years, this Paris, famous for its short memory, would recognize the original model in the idealized picture the novelist has drawn of him, and that voices would be raised to charge with ingratitude one who most assuredly was not his hero's "assiduous guest," but simply, in their infrequent meetings, an inquisitive acquaintance on whose mind the truth is quickly photographed, and who can never efface from his memory the images that are once imprinted thereon?

I knew the "real Nabob" in 1864. I occupied at that time a semi-official position which forced

me to exhibit great reserve in my visits to that luxurious and hospitable Levantine. Later I was intimately associated with one of his brothers; but at that time the poor Nabob was far away, struggling through thickets of cruel brambles, and he was seen at Paris only occasionally. Moreover, it is very unpleasant for a courteous man to reckon thus with the dead, and to say: "You are mistaken. Although he was an agreeable host, I was not often seen at his table." Let it suffice therefore, for me to declare that, in speaking of Mère Françoise's son as I have done, it has been my purpose to represent him in a favorable light, and that the charge of ingratitude seems to me an absurdity from every standpoint. That this is true is proved by the fact that many people consider the portrait too flattering, more interesting than nature. To such people my reply is very simple: "Jansoulet strikes me as an excellent fellow; but at all events, if I am wrong, you can blame the newspapers for telling you his real name. I gave you my novel as a novel, good or bad, without any guaranty of resemblances."

As to Mora, that is another matter. Something has been said of indiscretion, of political defection. Great Heaven! I have never made a secret of it. At the age of twenty, I was connected with the office of the high functionary who has served as my model; and my friends of those days know what a serious political personage I made. The Department also must have strange recollections of that eccentric clerk with the Merovingian beard, who was always

the last to arrive and the first to depart, and who never went up to the duke's private office except to ask leave of absence; of a naturally independent character, too, with hands unstained by anything like sycophancy, and so little reconciled to the Empire that, on the day when the duke proposed to him to enter his service, the future attaché deemed it his duty to declare with touching juvenile solemnity that "he was a Legitimist."

"So is the Empress," was His Excellency's reply, and he smiled with calm and impertinent condescension. I always saw him with that smile on his face, nor had I any need to look through keyholes; and I have drawn him so, as he loved to appear, in his Richelieu-Brummel attitude. History will attend to the statesman. I have exhibited him, introducing him at long range in my fictitious drama, as the worldly creature that he was and wished to be, being well assured that in his lifetime it would not have offended him to be so presented.

This is what I had to say. And now, having made these declarations in all frankness, let us return to work with all speed. My preface will seem a little short, and the curious reader will seek in vain therein the anticipated piquancy. So much the worse for him. Brief as this page may be, it is three times too long for me. Prefaces have this disadvantage, that they prevent one from writing books.

ALPHONSE DAUDET.

I.

DOCTOR JENKINS' PATIENTS.

STANDING on the stoop of his little house on Rue de Lisbonne, freshly shaved, with sparkling eye, lips slightly parted, long hair tinged with gray falling over a broad coat-collar, square-shouldered, robust, and sound as an oak, the illustrious Irish doctor, Robert Jenkins, chevalier of the Medjidie and of the distinguished order of Charles III. of Spain, member of several learned and benevolent societies, founder and president of the Work of Bethlehem, — in a word, Jenkins, the Jenkins of the Jenkins Arsenical Pills, that is to say, the fashionable physician of the year 1864, and the busiest man in Paris, was on the point of entering his carriage, one morning toward the end of November, when a window on the first floor looking on the inner courtyard was thrown open, and a woman's voice timidly inquired:

"Shall you return to breakfast, Robert?"

Oh! what a bright, affectionate smile it was that suddenly illumined that handsome, apostle-like face, and how readily one could divine, in the loving good-morning that his eyes sent up to the warm

white peignoir visible behind the parted hangings, one of those tranquil, undoubting conjugal passions, which custom binds with its most flexible and strongest bonds.

"No, Madame Jenkins" — he loved to give her thus publicly her title of legitimate wife, as if he felt a secret satisfaction therein, a sort of salve to his conscience with respect to the woman who made life so attractive to him — "No, do not expect me this morning. I am to breakfast on Place Vendôme."

"Ah! yes, the Nabob," said the lovely Madame Jenkins, with a very marked inflection of respect for that personage out of the *Thousand and One Nights*, of whom all Paris had been talking for a month; then, after a moment's hesitation, she whispered between the heavy hangings, very softly, very lovingly, for the doctor's ear alone: "Be sure and not forget what you promised me."

It was probably a promise very difficult to keep, for, at the reminder, the apostle's brows contracted, his smile froze upon his lips, his whole face assumed an incredibly harsh expression; but it was a matter of a moment. The faces of these fashionable physicians become very expert in lying, by the bedsides of their wealthy patients. With his most affectionate, most cordial manner, and showing a row of dazzling teeth, he replied:

"What I promised shall be done, Madame Jenkins. Now, go in at once and close your window. The mist is cold this morning."

Yes, the mist was cold, but white as snow; and, hovering outside the windows of the comfortable coupé, it lighted up with soft reflections the newspaper in the doctor's hands. Over yonder in the dark, crowded, populous quarters, in the Paris of tradesmen and workmen, they know nothing of the pretty morning mist that loiters on the broad avenues; the bustle of the waking hours, the passing and repassing of market-gardeners' wagons, omnibuses, drays loaded with old iron, soon chop it and rend it and scatter it. Each passer-by carries away a little of it on a threadbare coat, a worn muffler, or coarse gloves rubbing against each other. It drenches the shivering blouses, the waterproofs thrown over working dresses; it blends with all the breaths, hot with insomnia or alcohol, buries itself in the depths of empty stomachs, penetrates the shops which are just opening their doors, dark courtyards, staircases, where it stands on the balusters and walls, and fireless garrets. That is why so little of it remains out-of-doors. But in that open, stately portion of Paris where Dr. Jenkins' patients lived, on those broad tree-lined boulevards, those deserted quays, the mist soared immaculate, in innumerable waves, as light and fleecy as down. It was compact, discreet, almost luxurious, because the sun, slothful in his rising, was beginning to diffuse soft, purplish tints, which gave to the mist that enveloped everything, even the roofs of the rows of mansions, the aspect of a sheet of white muslin spread over scarlet cloth. One would have said that it was a great curtain

sheltering the long, untroubled sleep of wealth, a thick curtain behind which nothing could be heard save the soft closing of a porte-cochère, the rattling of the milkmen's tin cans, the bells of a herd of asses trotting by, followed by the short, panting breath of their conductor, and the rumbling of Jenkins' coupé beginning its daily round.

First of all, to the hôtel de Mora. On the Quai d'Orléans, beside the Spanish embassy, stood a superb palace with its principal entrance on Rue de Lille, and a door on the riverside, and long terraces which formed a continuation of those of the embassy. Between two high, ivy-covered walls, connected by imposing stone arches, the coupé flew like an arrow, announced by two strokes of a clanging bell, which aroused Jenkins from the trance in which the perusal of his newspaper seemed to have plunged him. Then the wheels rolled less noisily over the gravel of a vast court-yard and stopped, after a graceful sweep, at the front steps, above which was spread a circular awning. One could see indistinctly through the mist half a score of carriages in a line, and the silhouettes of English grooms leading the duke's saddle-horse up and down an avenue of acacias, all leafless at that season and standing naked in their bark. Everything revealed well-ordered, pompous, assured luxury.

"It makes no difference how early I come, others are always here before me," said Jenkins, glancing at the line in which his coupé took its place; but, certain of not being compelled to wait,

with head erect and a tranquil air of authority, he went up the official steps, over which so many trembling ambitions, so many stumbling anxieties passed every day.

Even in the reception-room, high-studded, and resonant as a church, which two huge fires filled with gleaming life, notwithstanding the great stoves burning day and night, the magnificence of the establishment burst upon one in warm and heady puffs. There was a suggestion of the hot-house and the drying-room as well. Great heat and abundant light; white wainscoting, white marble statues, immense windows, nothing confined or close, and yet an equable atmosphere well fitted to encompass the existence of some delicate, over-refined, nervous mortal. Jenkins expanded in that factitious sunlight of wealth; he saluted with a "good-morning, boys," the powdered Swiss with the broad gilt baldric and the footmen in short clothes and blue and gold livery, all of whom had risen in his honor, touched lightly with his finger the great cage of monkeys capering about with shrill cries, and darted whistling up the white marble stairs covered with a carpet soft and dense as a lawn, to the duke's apartments. Although he had been coming to the hôtel de Mora for six months, the good doctor had not yet become hardened to the purely physical impression of cheerfulness and lightness of heart caused by the atmosphere of that house.

Although it was the abode of the highest functionary of the Empire, there was nothing to sug-

gest the departments or their boxes of dusty documents. The duke had consented to accept the exalted post of Minister of State and President of the Council only on condition that he need not leave his house; that he should go to the department only an hour or two a day, long enough to affix his signatures to documents that required it, and that he should hold his audiences in his bedroom. At that moment, although it was so early, the salon was full. There were serious, anxious faces, provincial prefects with shaven lips and administrative whiskers, something less arrogant in that reception-room than in their prefectures; magistrates, stern of manner, dignified of gesture; deputies full of importance, shining lights of finance, substantial manufacturers from the country; and among them could be distinguished, here and there, the thin ambitious face of a deputy councillor to some prefecture, in the garb of a solicitor, black coat and white cravat; and one and all, standing or seated, alone or in groups, silently forced with a glance the lock of that lofty door, closed upon their destinies, from which they would come forth in a moment, triumphant or crestfallen. Jenkins walked rapidly through the crowd, and every one followed with an envious eye this new arrival, whom the usher, in his chain of office, frigid and correct in his bearing, seated at a table beside the door, greeted with a smile that was both respectful and familiar.

"Who is with him?" the doctor inquired, pointing to the duke's room.

With the end of his lips, and not without a slightly ironical twinkle of the eye, the usher murmured a name, which, if they had heard it, would have angered all those exalted personages who had been waiting an hour for the *costumier* of the opera to finish his audience.

A murmur of voices, a flash of light — Jenkins had entered the duke's presence; *he* never waited.

Standing with his back to the fire, dressed in a blue fur-trimmed jacket, which heightened by its soft reflection the strength and haughtiness of his face, the President of the Council was superintending the drawing of a Pierrette's costume for the duchess to wear at her next ball, and giving directions with as much gravity as if he were dictating the draft of a law.

"Have very fine pleats on the ruff and none at all on the sleeves. — Good-morning, Jenkins. At your service."

Jenkins bowed and stepped forward into the enormous room, whose windows, opening on a garden that extended to the Seine, commanded one of the loveliest views in all Paris, the bridges, the Tuileries, the Louvre, interlaced with trees as black as if they were drawn in India ink on the wavering background of the mist. A broad, very low bed on a platform a few steps above the floor, two or three small lacquer screens with vague fanciful decorations in gold, denoting, as did the double doors and the heavy woollen carpet, a dread of cold carried to excess, chairs of various styles, long chairs and low chairs, placed at ran-

dom, all well-stuffed and of lazy or voluptuous shapes, composed the furniture of that famous room, where the most momentous and the most trivial questions were discussed with the same gravity of tone and manner. There was a beautiful portrait of the duchess on the wall; and on the mantel a bust of the duke, the work of Felicia Ruys, which had received the honor of a medal of the first class at the recent Salon.

"Well, Jenkins, how goes it this morning?" said His Excellency, walking to meet the doctor, while the costumer was collecting his fashion plates, which were strewn about over all the chairs.

"And you, my dear duke? I fancied that you were a little pale last night at the Variétés."

"Nonsense! I was never so well. Your pills have a most amazing effect on me. I feel so lively, so vigorous. When I think how completely foundered I was six months ago!"

Jenkins, without speaking, had put his great head against the minister's jacket, at the spot where the heart beats in the majority of mankind. He listened a moment while His Excellency continued to talk in the indolent, listless tone which was one of his chief claims to distinction.

"Whom were you with last night, doctor? That great bronzed Tartar who laughed so loud at the front of your box?"

"That was the Nabob, Monsieur le Duc. The famous Jansoulet, who is so much talked about just now."

"I might have suspected it. The whole audience was looking at him. The actresses played at him all the time. Do you know him? What sort of a man is he?"

"I know him. That is, I am treating him. Thanks, my dear duke, that's all. Everything is all right there. When he arrived in Paris a month ago, the change of climate disturbed him a little. He sent for me, and since then has taken a great fancy to me. All that I know of him is that he has a colossal fortune, made in Tunis, in the Bey's service, that he has a loyal heart, a generous mind in which ideas of humanity —"

"At Tunis?" the duke interposed, being naturally far from sentimental and humanitarian. "Then, why the name of Nabob?"

"Bah! Parisians don't look so deep as that. In their eyes every rich stranger is a nabob, no matter where he comes from. This one, however, has just the physique for the part, coppery complexion, eyes like coals of fire, and in addition a gigantic fortune, of which he makes, I have no hesitation in saying, a most noble and most intelligent use. I owe it to him" — here the doctor assumed an air of modesty — "I owe it to him that I have succeeded at last in inaugurating the Work of Bethlehem for nursing infants, which a morning newspaper that I was looking over just now — the *Messager*, I think, — calls 'the great philanthropic idea of the century.'"

The duke glanced in an absent-minded way at

the sheet the doctor handed him. He was not the man to be taken in by paid puffs.

"This Monsieur Jansoulet must be very wealthy," he said coldly. "He is a partner in Cardailhac's theatre. Monpavon persuades him to pay his debts, Bois-l'Héry stocks his stable for him and old Schwalbach furnishes a picture gallery. All that costs money."

Jenkins began to laugh.

"What can you expect, my dear duke; you are an object of great interest to the poor Nabob. Coming to Paris with a firm purpose to become a Parisian, a man of the world, he has taken you for his model in everything, and I do not conceal from you that he would be very glad to study his model at closer quarters."

"I know, I know, Monpavon has already asked leave to bring him here. But I prefer to wait and see. One must be on one's guard with these great fortunes that come from such a distance. *Mon Dieu*, I don't say, you know, that if I should meet him elsewhere than in my own house, at the theatre, or in somebody's salon —"

"It happens that Madame Jenkins intends to give a little party next month. If you would do us the honor —"

"I shall be very glad to go to your house, my dear doctor, and if the Nabob should be there, I should not object to his being presented to me."

At that moment the usher opened the door.

"Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur is in the blue salon. He has but a word to say to Your

Excellency. Monsieur le Préfet de Police is still waiting below, in the gallery."

"Very good," said the duke, "I will go to him. But I should like to make a definite arrangement about this costume first. Let us see, friend What's-your-name, what do we decide about those ruffs? *Au revoir*, doctor. Nothing to do but keep on with the pearls, is there?"

"Keep on with the pearls," said Jenkins, bowing; and he took his leave, radiant over the two bits of good fortune that fell to his lot at the same time — the honor of entertaining the duke, and the pleasure of gratifying his dear Nabob. The crowd of petitioners through whom he passed in the antechamber was even greater than when he entered; new arrivals had joined the patient waiters of the first hour, others were hurrying upstairs, pale-faced and full of business, and in the courtyard carriages continued to arrive, to range themselves gravely and solemnly in a double circle, while the question of ruffed sleeves was discussed upstairs with no less solemnity.

"To the club," said Jenkins to his coachman.

The coupé rolled along the quays, recrossed the bridges, and turned into Place de la Concorde, which already wore a different aspect from that it had worn a short time before. The mist had lifted in the direction of the Garde-Meuble and the Greek temple of the Madeleine, revealing here and there the white spray of a fountain, the arcade of a palace, the top of a statue, the shrubbery of

the Tuileries, shivering by the gates. The veil, not raised but rent in spots, discovered patches of blue sky: and, on the avenue leading to the Arc de Triomphe, one could see breaks driving swiftly along, filled with coachmen and jockeys, dragoons of the Empress's corps, body-guards in gorgeous fur-lined coats riding two by two in long lines, with a great clanking of bits and spurs and neighing of fresh horses, all in the light of a still invisible sun, emerging from the vague depths of the mist, plunging into it again in masses, like a swiftly-vanishing vision of the morning splendor of that quarter.

Jenkins alighted at the corner of Rue Royale. From roof to cellar of the great gambling-house servants were bustling about, shaking rugs, airing the salons where the odor of cigar-smoke still lingered, where heaps of fine ashes were blowing about in the fireplaces, while on the green tables, still quivering with the games of the night, the candles were still burning in silver candelabra, the flame ascending straight into the pallid light of day. The uproar and the going and coming ceased on the third floor, where several members of the club had their apartments. Of the number was the Marquis de Monpavon, to whose door Jenkins bent his steps.

"Ah! is it you, doctor? Deuce take it! What time is it, pray? I 'm not at home."

"Not even to the doctor?"

"Oh! not to anybody. A question of costume, my dear fellow. Never mind, come in all the same.

Toast your feet a moment while François finishes my hair."

Jenkins entered the bedroom, which was as prosaic a place as all furnished apartments are, and approached the fire, where curling-tongs of all dimensions were heating, while from the adjoining laboratory, separated from the bedroom by an Algerian curtain, the Marquis de Monpavon submitted to the manipulations of his valet. Odors of patchouli, cold cream, burned horn and burned hair escaped from the restricted quarters; and from time to time, when François came out to take a fresh pair of tongs, Jenkins caught a glimpse of an enormous dressing-table laden with innumerable little instruments of ivory, steel, and mother-of-pearl, files, scissors, powder-puffs and brushes, phials, cups, cosmetics, labelled, arranged in lines, and amid all that rubbish, petty ironmongery and dolls' playthings, a hand, the hand of an old man, awkward and trembling, dry and long, with nails as carefully kept as a Japanese painter's.

While making up his face, the longest and most complicated of his matutinal occupations, Monpavon chatted with the doctor, told him of his aches and pains and of the good effect of the pearls, which were making him younger, he said. And listening to him thus, at a little distance, without seeing him, one would have believed he was the Duc de Mora, he had so faithfully copied his way of speaking. There were the same unfinished sentences, ending in a *ps—ps—ps*— uttered between the teeth. "What's-his-names"

and "What-d' ye-call-'ems" at every turn, a sort of lazy, bored, aristocratic stammer, in which one divined profound contempt for the vulgar art of speech. In the duke's circle everybody strove to copy that accent, those disdainful intonations, in which there was an affectation of simplicity.

Jenkins, finding the session a little tedious, rose to go.

"Adieu, I am going. Shall I see you at the Nabob's?"

"Yes, I expect to breakfast there — promised to take What 's-his-name, Thingumbob, you know, about our great affair — ps — ps — ps. Were n't for that, I 'd stay away — downright menagerie, that house."

The Irishman, despite his kindly feeling, agreed that the society at his friend's house was a little mixed. But what of that! they must not blame him for that. He did n't know any better, poor man.

"Does n't know and won't learn," said Monpavon sourly. "Instead of consulting men of experience — ps — ps — ps — takes the first sycophant that comes. Did you see the horses Bois-l'Héry bought for him? Downright swindle, those beasts. And he paid twenty thousand francs for them. I 'll wager Bois-l'Héry got 'em for six thousand."

"Oh! fie, fie — a gentleman!" said Jenkins, with the indignation of a noble soul refusing to believe in evil.

Monpavon went on, as if he did not hear:

"And all because the horses came from Mora's stable!"

"To be sure, the dear Nabob's heart is set on the duke. So that I shall make him very happy when I tell him — "

The doctor stopped, in some embarrassment.

"When you tell him what, Jenkins?"

Jenkins, looking decidedly sheepish, was forced to admit that he had obtained permission from His Excellency to present his friend Jansoulet. He had hardly finished his sentence when a tall spectre with flabby cheeks and multicolored hair and whiskers darted from the dressing-room into the chamber, holding together with both hands at his skinny but very straight neck, a dressing-gown of light silk with violet dots, in which he had enveloped himself like a bonbon in its paper wrapper. The most salient feature in that heroi-comic countenance was a great arched nose shining with cold cream, and a keen, piercing eye, too youthful, too clear for the heavy, wrinkled lid that covered it. All of Jenkins' patients had that same eye.

Verily Monpavon must have been deeply moved to show himself thus shorn of all prestige. In fact it was with white lips and in a changed voice that he now addressed the doctor, without the affected stammer, speaking rapidly and without stopping to breathe: —

"Come, come, my dear fellow, there's no nonsense between us, is there? We have met in front of the same porringer; but I let you have your share and I propose that you shall let me have mine." Jenkins' air of amazement did not check

him. "Let it be understood once for all. I promised the Nabob that I'd present him to the duke as I presented you long ago. Don't you interfere in what concerns me and me alone."

Jenkins, with his hand upon his heart, protested his innocence. He had never had any such intention. Of course Monpavon was too close a friend of the duke for any one else to — How could he have imagined such a thing?

"I imagine nothing," said the old nobleman, more subdued, but still very cold. "I simply wanted to have a perfectly frank explanation with you on this subject."

The Irishman held out his broad open palm.

"My dear marquis, explanations are always frank between men of honor."

"Honor is a great word, Jenkins. Let us say men of good-breeding. That is sufficient."

And as that same good-breeding, which he put forward as a supreme guide of conduct, suddenly reminded him of his absurd plight, the marquis offered a finger for his friend's demonstrative grasp and passed hastily behind his curtain, while the other took his leave, in haste to continue his round of visits.

What a magnificent practice this Jenkins had, to be sure! Nothing but princely mansions, halls comfortably heated and filled with flowers on every floor, downy, silk-lined alcoves, wherein disease became quiet and refined, where nothing suggested the brutal hand that tosses upon a bed of misery

those who cease to work only to die. To tell the truth, these clients of Dr. Jenkins were not patients at all. They would not have been received at a hospital. As their organs had not even strength enough to feel a shock, it was impossible to find the seat of their trouble, and the physician leaning over them would have listened in vain for the palpitation of suffering in those bodies which were already inhabited by the inertia and silence of death. They were weakened, exhausted, anæmic, consumed by their absurd mode of life, and yet so attached to it that they strove desperately to prolong it. And the Jenkins Pearls became famous just because of the lashing they administered to jaded constitutions.

"Doctor, I implore you, let me go to the ball this evening!" a young woman would say, as she lay, utterly prostrated, in her invalid's chair, her voice hardly more than a breath.

"You shall go, my dear child."

And go she would, and look lovelier than ever before.

"Doctor, at any price, even if it's the death of me, I must be at the council of ministers to-morrow morning."

He would be there and would win new triumphs by his eloquence and ambitious diplomacy. And afterward — oh! afterward, indeed. But no matter! to their last day Jenkins' patients went about, showed themselves, deceived the consuming selfishness of the multitude. They died on their feet, like men and women of the world.

After innumerable turns on the Chaussée d'Antin and Champs-Élysées, after visiting all the millionaires and titled personages in Faubourg Saint-Honoré, the doctor drew up at the corner of Cours-la-Reine and Rue François I., before a house with a swell front which stood at the corner of the quay, and entered an apartment on the ground floor which in no wise resembled those he had visited since the morning. Immediately upon entering, the tapestries that covered the walls, the old stained glass windows intersecting with their lead sashes the soft, many-hued light, a gigantic saint in carved wood facing a Japanese monster with bulging eyes and back covered with highly polished scales, indicated the imaginative and eccentric taste of an artist. The small servant who opened the door held in leash an Arabian greyhound larger than himself.

"Madame Constance is at mass," he said, "and mademoiselle is in the studio, alone. We have been working since six o'clock this morning," the child added, with a terrible yawn, which the dog caught on the wing, and which caused him to open wide his red mouth with its rows of sharp teeth.

Jenkins, whom we have seen enter the private apartments of the Minister of State with such perfect tranquillity, trembled slightly as he raised the portière that hid the open doorway of the studio. It was a magnificent sculptor's workroom, the rounded front being entirely of glass, with columns at either side: a large bay-window flooded with

light and at that moment tinged with opal by the mist. More ornate than the majority of these workrooms, to which the daubs of plaster, the modelling tools, the clay scattered about and the splashes of water give something of the appearance of a mason's yard, this one blended a little coquetry with its artistic equipment. Green plants in every corner, a few good pictures hanging on the bare wall, and here and there — on oak pedestals — two or three of the works of Sébastien Ruys, whose very last work, not exhibited until after his death, was covered with black gauze.

The mistress of the establishment, Felicia Ruys, daughter of the famous sculptor, and already known to fame herself by two masterpieces, the bust of her father and that of the Duc de Mora, stood in the centre of the studio, at work modelling a figure. Dressed in a blue cloth riding-habit with long folds, a scarf of China silk twisted around her neck like a boy's cravat, her fine, black hair, gathered carelessly on top of her little Grecian head, Felicia was working with extreme zeal, which added to her beauty by the condensation, so to speak, the concentration of all her features in a scrutinizing and satisfied expression. But it changed abruptly on the doctor's arrival.

"Ah! it's you, is it?" she said brusquely, as if waking from a dream. "Did you ring? I did not hear."

And in the ennui, the weariness that suddenly overspread that lovely face, only the eyes retained their expression and brilliancy, eyes in which the

factitious gleam of the Jenkins Pearls was heightened by a natural fierceness.

Oh! how humble and condescending the doctor's voice became, as he replied:

"Your work absorbs you completely, does it not, my dear Felicia? Is it something new that you're doing? I should say that it is very pretty."

He drew near to the still formless sketch in which a group of two animals could be vaguely distinguished, one of them, a greyhound, flying over the ground at a truly extraordinary pace.

"The idea came to me last night. I began to work by lamplight. My poor Kadour doesn't find it amusing," said the girl, looking with a caressing expression of affection at the greyhound, whose paws the small servant was trying to separate in order to force him into the proper pose.

Jenkins observed with a fatherly air that she did wrong to tire herself so, and added, taking her wrist with ecclesiastical precautions:

"Let us see, I am sure that you are feverish."

At the touch of that hand Felicia had a feeling of something very like repulsion.

"Let me alone — let me alone — your pearls can do nothing for me. When I am not working, I am bored, bored to death, so bored that I could kill myself; my ideas are of the color of that thick, brackish water flowing yonder. To be just at the beginning of life and to be disgusted with it! It's hard. I am reduced to the point of envying my poor Constance, who passes her days in her chair, never opening her mouth, but smiling all by her-

"'Your work absorbs you completely, my dear Felicia.'"

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self at her memories of the past. I have not even that, not even any pleasant memories to recall. I have nothing but work — work!"

As she spoke, she worked fiercely, sometimes with the tool, sometimes with her fingers, which she wiped from time to time on a little sponge kept on the wooden frame on which the group stood; so that her complaints, her lamentations, inexplicable in a mouth of twenty years which had in repose the purity of a Grecian smile, seemed to be uttered at random, and addressed to no one in particular. And yet Jenkins seemed anxious and disturbed, notwithstanding the apparent interest he displayed in the artist's work, or rather in the artist herself, in the queenly grace of that mere girl, whose style of beauty seemed to have predestined her to the study of the plastic arts.

Annoyed by that admiring glance, which she felt like a weight, Felicia resumed:

"By the way, do you know that I saw your Nabob? He was pointed out to me at the Opera, Friday."

"Were you at the Opera, Friday?"

"Yes. The duke sent me his box."

Jenkins changed color.

"I persuaded Constance to go with me. It was the first time in twenty years, since her farewell performance, that she had entered the Opera. It made a great impression on her. During the ballet especially, she trembled, she beamed, all her former triumphs sparkled in her eyes. How fortunate one is to have such emotions. A perfect type

of his class, that Nabob. You must bring him to see me. It would amuse me to do his head."

"What! why he is frightful! You can't have had a good look at him."

"Indeed I did, on the contrary. He was opposite us. That white Ethiopian visage would be superb in marble. And not commonplace, at all events. Moreover, if he's so ugly as all that, you won't be so unhappy as you were last year when I was doing Mora's bust. What a wicked face you had at that time, Jenkins!"

"Not for ten years of life," muttered Jenkins in a threatening voice, "would I go through those hours again. But it amuses you to see people suffer."

"You know very well that nothing amuses me," she said, shrugging her shoulders with supreme impertinence.

Then, without looking at him, without another word, she plunged into one of those periods of intense activity by means of which true artists escape from themselves and all their surroundings.

Jenkins took a few hurried steps, deeply moved, his lip swollen with avowals that dared not come forth, and began two or three sentences that met with no reply; at last, feeling that he was dismissed, he took his hat and walked toward the door.

"It's understood then, is it? I am to bring him here?"

"Who, pray?"

"Why, the Nabob. Only a moment ago you said yourself—"

"Oh! yes," said the strange creature, whose caprices were not of long duration, "bring him if you choose; I don't care particularly about it."

And her musical, listless voice, in which something seemed to have broken, the utter indifference of her whole bearing showed that it was true, that she cared for nothing on earth.

Jenkins went away in sore perplexity, with clouded brow. But as soon as he had passed the door he resumed his smiling, cordial manner, being one of those men who wear a mask on the street. The mist, still visible in the neighborhood of the Seine, was reduced to a few floating shreds, which gave an air of vapory unsubstantiality to the houses on the quay, to the steam-boats of which only the paddle-wheels could be seen, and to the distant horizon, where the dome of the Invalides hovered like a gilded balloon, whose netting shed rays of light. The increasing warmth, the activity in the quarter indicated that noon was not far away and that it would soon be announced by the ringing of all the bells.

Before calling upon the Nabob, however, Jenkins had another call to make. But it seemed to be a great nuisance to him. However, as he had promised! So he said, with sudden decision, as he jumped into the carriage:

"68 Rue Saint-Ferdinand, aux Ternes."

Joe, the coachman, was scandalized and made his master repeat the address; even the horse showed some little hesitation, as if the valuable beast and the spotless new livery were disgusted

at having to visit a faubourg so far away, outside the restricted but brilliant circle in which their master's patients were grouped together. They arrived, however, without hindrance, at the end of an unfinished provincial street, and at the last of its houses, a five-story building, which the street seemed to have sent out to reconnoitre and ascertain if it could safely continue in that direction, isolated as it was between desolate tracts of land awaiting prospective buildings or filled with the materials of demolished structures, with blocks of stone, old blinds with no rooms to shelter, boards with hanging hinges, a vast boneyard of a whole demolished quarter.

Innumerable signs swayed in the wind over the door, which was adorned with a large case of photographs, white with dust, before which Jenkins paused for a moment. Had the illustrious physician come so far to have his picture taken? One might have thought so from the interest which detained him in front of that case, containing fifteen or twenty photographs representing the same family in different groups and attitudes and with different expressions: an old gentleman with his chin supported by a high white stock, and a leather satchel under his arm, surrounded by a bevy of maidens with their hair arranged in braids or in curls. Sometimes the old gentleman had sat with only two of his daughters; or perhaps one of those pretty, graceful figures appeared alone, her elbow resting on a truncated column, her head bending over a book, in a natural and

unstudied pose. But it was always the same motive with variations, and there was no other male figure in the case but the old gentleman in the white cravat, and no other female figures than those of his numerous daughters.

"Studios on the fifth floor," said a sign over the case. Jenkins sighed, measured with his eye the distance from the ground to the little balcony up among the clouds; then he made up his mind to enter. In the hall he passed a white cravat and a majestic leather satchel, evidently the old gentleman of the show-case. Upon being questioned, he replied that M. Maranne did in fact live on the fifth floor. "But," he added with an engaging smile, "the floors are not high." With that encouragement the Irishman started up an entirely new and narrow staircase, with landings no larger than a stair, a single door on each floor and windows which afforded glimpses of a melancholy paved courtyard and other stairways, all empty: one of those horrible modern houses, built by the dozen by contractors without a sou, their greatest disadvantage consisting in the thinness of the partitions, which forces all the lodgers to live together as in a Fourierite community. For the moment that disadvantage was not of serious consequence, only the fourth and fifth floors being occupied, as if the tenants had fallen from the sky.

On the fourth, behind a door bearing a copper plate with the words: M. JOYEUSE, *Expert in Handwriting*, the doctor heard the sound of fresh, young laughter and conversation and active foot-

steps, which accompanied him to the door of the photographic establishment above.

These little industries, perching in out-of-the-way corners, and seeming to have no communication with the outer world, are one of the surprises of Paris. We wonder how people live who take to them for a living. What scrupulous providence, for instance, could send customers to a photographer on a fifth floor among waste lands, at the far end of Rue Ferdinand, or documents for examination to the expert on the floor below. Jenkins, as he made that reflection, smiled a pitying smile, then entered without ceremony as he was invited to do by this inscription: "Walk in without knocking." Alas! the permission was not abused. —A tall youth in spectacles, who was writing at a small table, his legs wrapped in a traveling shawl, rose hurriedly to greet the visitor, whom his short-sightedness prevented him from recognizing.

"Good-morning, André," said the doctor, extending his hand cordially.

"Monsieur Jenkins!"

"I am a good fellow as always, you see. Your conduct to us, your persistence in living apart from your relatives, commended to my dignity the utmost reserve in dealing with you; but your mother wept. And here I am."

As he was speaking, he glanced about the poor little studio, where the bare walls, the scanty furniture the brand-new photographic apparatus, the little fireplace *à la prussienne*, also new, which

had never seen a fire, were disastrously apparent in the bright light that fell from the glass roof. The drawn features and straggling beard of the young man, whose very light eyes, high, narrow forehead, and long fair hair thrown back in disorder gave him the appearance of a visionary, all were accentuated in the uncompromising light; and so was the dogged will expressed in that limpid glance which met Jenkins' eye coldly, and offered in anticipation an unconquerable opposition to all his arguments, all his protestations.

But the excellent Jenkins pretended not to notice it.

"You know how it is, my dear André. From the day that I married your mother, I have looked upon you as my son. I expected to leave you my office, my practice, to place your foot in a golden stirrup, and I was overjoyed to see you follow a career devoted to the welfare of mankind. Suddenly, without a word of explanation, without a thought for the effect such a rupture might produce in the eyes of the world, you cut loose from us, you dropped your studies and renounced your future prospects, to embark in some degrading mode of life, to adopt an absurd trade, the refuge and the pretext of all those who are shut out from the society to which they belong."

"I am working at this trade for a living. It's a means of earning my bread while I wait."

"Wait for what? — literary renown?"

He glanced contemptuously at the papers scattered over the table.

"But all this does not touch the question; this is what I came here to say to you: an opportunity is offered you, a door thrown wide open to the future. The Work of Bethlehem is founded. The noblest of my humanitarian dreams has taken shape. We have bought a magnificent villa at Nanterre in which to install our first branch. The superintendence, the management of that establishment is what it has occurred to me to offer to you, as to another myself. A princely house to live in, the salary of a major-general, and the satisfaction of rendering a service to the great human family. Say the word and I will take you to see the Nabob, the noble-hearted man who pays the expenses of our undertaking. Do you accept?"

"No," said the author, so abruptly that Jenkins was disconcerted.

"That's it. I expected a refusal when I came here, but I came none the less. I took for my motto, 'Do what is right, without hope.' And I am faithful to my motto. So, it's understood, is it — that you prefer a life dependent on chance, without prospects and without dignity, to the honorable, dignified, useful life that I offer you?"

André made no reply; but his silence spoke for him.

"Beware — you know to what this decision of yours will lead, a final estrangement; but you have always desired it. I need not tell you," continued Jenkins, "that to break with me is to break with your mother also. She and I are one."

The young man turned pale, hesitated a second, then said with an effort:

"If my mother cares to come and see me here, I shall certainly be very happy — but my determination to remain apart from you, to have nothing in common with you, is irrevocable."

"At least, you will tell me why?"

He made a gesture signifying, "no," that he would not tell him.

For the moment the Irishman was really angry. His whole face assumed a savage, cunning expression which would have greatly surprised those who knew only the good-humored, open-hearted Jenkins; but he was careful to go no farther in the direction of an explanation, which he dreaded perhaps no less than he desired it.

"Adieu," he said from the doorway, half turning his head. "Never apply to us."

"Never," replied his stepson in a firm voice.

This time, when the doctor said to Joe: "Place Vendôme," the horse, as if he understood that they were going to call on the Nabob, proudly shook his shining curb, and the coupé drove away at full speed, transforming the hub of each of its wheels into a gleaming sun. "To come such a distance to meet with such a reception! One of the celebrities of the day treated so by that Bohemian! This comes of trying to do good!" Jenkins vented his wrath in a long monologue in that vein; then suddenly exclaimed with a shrug: "Oh! pshaw!" And such traces of care as remained on his brow soon vanished on the pave-

ment of Place Vendôme. On all sides the clocks were striking twelve in the sunshine. Emerging from her curtain of mist, fashionable Paris, awake and on her feet, was beginning her day of giddy pleasure. The shop-windows on Rue de la Paix shone resplendent. The mansions on the square seemed to be drawn up proudly in line for the afternoon receptions; and, at the end of Rue Castiglione with its white arcades, the Tuileries, in the glorious sunlight of winter, marshalled its shivering statues, pink with cold, among the leafless quincunxes.

II.

A BREAKFAST ON PLACE VENDÔME.

THERE were hardly more than a score of persons that morning in the Nabob's dining-room, a dining-room finished in carved oak, supplied only the day before from the establishment of some great house-furnisher, who furnished at the same time the four salons which could be seen, one beyond the other, through an open door: the hangings, the objects of art, the chandeliers, even the plate displayed on the sideboards, even the servants who served the breakfast. It was the perfect type of the establishment improvised, immediately upon alighting from the railway train, by a parvenu of colossal wealth, in great haste to enjoy himself. Although there was no sign of a woman's dress about the table, no bit of light and airy material to enliven the scene, it was by no means monotonous, thanks to the incongruity, the nondescript character of the guests, gathered together from all ranks of society, specimens of mankind culled from every race in France, in Europe, in the whole world, from top to bottom of the social scale. First of all, the master of the house, a sort of giant

— sunburned, swarthy, with his head between his shoulders — to whom his short nose, lost in the puffiness of the face, his woolly hair massed like an Astrakhan cap over a low, headstrong forehead, his bristling eyebrows with eyes like a wild cat's in ambush, gave the ferocious aspect of a Kalmuk, of a savage on the frontiers of civilization, who lived by war and marauding. Luckily the lower part of the face, the thick, double lips which parted readily in a fascinating, good-humored smile, tempered with a sort of Saint Vincent de Paul expression that uncouth ugliness, that original countenance, so original that it forgot to be commonplace. But his inferior extraction betrayed itself in another direction by his voice, the voice of a Rhone boatman, hoarse and indistinct, in which the southern accent became rather coarse than harsh, and by two broad, short hands, with hairy fingers, square at the ends and with almost no nails, which, as they rested on the white table cloth, spoke of their past with embarrassing eloquence. Opposite the host, on the other side of the table, at which he was a regular guest, was the Marquis de Monpavon, but a Monpavon who in no wise resembled the mottled spectre whom we saw in the last chapter; a man of superb physique, in the prime of life, with a long, majestic nose, the haughty bearing of a great nobleman, displaying a vast breastplate of spotless linen, which cracked under the continuous efforts of the chest to bend forward, and swelled out every time with a noise like that made by a turkey gobbling, or a peacock

spreading his tail. His name Monpavon was well suited to him.[1]

Belonging to a great family, with wealthy kindred, the Duc de Mora's friendship had procured for him a receiver-generalship of the first class. Unfortunately his health had not permitted him to retain that fine berth — well-informed persons said that his health had nothing to do with it — and he had been living in Paris for a year past, waiting until he should be cured, he said, to return to his post. The same persons asserted that he would never find it again, and that, were it not for the patronage of certain exalted personages — Be that as it may, he was the important guest at the breakfast; one could see that by the way in which the servants waited upon him, by the way in which the Nabob consulted him, calling him "Monsieur le Marquis," as they do at the Comédie Française, less from humility than from pride because of the honor that was reflected on himself. Filled with disdain for his fellow-guests, Monsieur le Marquis talked little, but with a very lofty manner, as if he were obliged to stoop to those persons whom he honored with his conversation. From time to time he tossed at the Nabob, across the table, sentences that were enigmatical to everybody.

"I saw the duke yesterday. He talked a good deal about you in connection with that matter of — you know, What 's-his-name, Thingumbob — Who is the man?"

"Really! He talked about me?" And the

[1] *Paon*, peacock — from Latin *pavo, pavonis.*

honest Nabob, swelling with pride, would look about him, nodding his head in a most laughable way, or would assume the meditative air of a pious woman when she hears the name of Our Lord.

"His Excellency would be pleased to have you go into the —ps—ps—ps— the thing."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Ask the governor — he heard it as well as I."

The person referred to as the governor, Paganetti by name, was an energetic, gesticulatory little man, tiresome to watch, his face assumed so many different expressions in a minute. He was manager of the *Caisse Territoriale* of Corsica, a vast financial enterprise, and was present in that house for the first time, brought by Monpavon; he also occupied a place of honor. On the Nabob's other side was an old man, buttoned to the chin in a frock-coat without lapels and with a standing collar, like an oriental tunic, with a face marred by innumerable little gashes, and a white moustache trimmed in military fashion. It was Brahim Bey, the most gallant officer of the regency of Tunis, *aide-de-camp* to the former bey, who made Jansoulet's fortune. This warrior's glorious exploits were written in wrinkles, in the scars of debauchery, on his lower lip which hung down helplessly as if the spring were broken, and in his inflamed, red eyes, devoid of lashes. His was one of the faces we see in the felon's dock in cases that are tried behind closed doors. The other guests had seated themselves pell-mell, as they arrived, or beside such acquaintances as

they chanced to meet, for the house was open to everybody, and covers were laid for thirty every morning.

There was the manager of the theatre in which the Nabob was a sleeping partner, — Cardailhac, almost as renowned for his wit as for his failures, that wonderful carver, who would prepare one of his *bons mots* as he detached the limbs of a partridge, and deposit it with a wing in the plate that was handed him. He was a sculptor rather than an *improvisateur*, and the new way of serving meats, having them carved beforehand in the Russian fashion, had been fatal to him by depriving him of all excuse for a preparatory silence. So it was generally said that he was failing. He was a thorough Parisian, a dandy to his fingers' ends, and as he himself boasted, "not full to bursting with superstition," which fact enabled him to give some very piquant details concerning the women in his theatrical company to Brahim Bey, who listened to him as one turns the pages of an obscene book, and to talk theology to his nearest neighbor, a young priest, curé of some little Southern village, a thin, gaunt fellow, with a complexion as dark as his cassock, with glowing cheek-bones, pointed nose, all the characteristics of an ambitious man, who said to Cardailhac, in a very loud voice, in a tone of condescension, of priestly authority:

"We are very well satisfied with Monsieur Guizot. He is doing well, very well — it's a victory for the Church."

Beside that pontiff with the starched band, old Schwalbach, the famous dealer in pictures, displayed his prophet's beard, yellow in spots like a dirty fleece, his three mouldy-looking waistcoats and all the slovenly, careless attire which people forgave him in the name of art, and because he had the good taste to have in his employ, at a time when the mania for galleries kept millions of money in circulation, the one man who was most expert in negotiating those vainglorious transactions. Schwalbach did not talk, contenting himself with staring about through his enormous lens-shaped monocle, and smiling in his beard at the extraordinary juxtapositions to be observed at that table, which stood alone in all the world. For instance Monpavon had very near him — and you should have seen how the disdainful curve of his nose was accentuated at every glance in his direction — Garrigou the singer, a countryman of Jansoulet, distinguished as a ventriloquist, who sang *Figaro* in the patois of the South and had not his like for imitating animals. A little farther on, Cabassu, another fellow-countryman, a short, thick-set man, with a bull-neck, a biceps worthy of Michel Angelo, who resembled equally a Marseillais hair-dresser and the Hercules at a country fair, a *masseur*, pedicurist, manicurist and something of a dentist, rested both elbows on the table with the assurance of a quack whom one receives in the morning and who knows the petty weaknesses, the private miseries of the house in which he happens to be. M. Bompain completed that

procession of subalterns, all classified with reference to some one specialty. Bompain, the secretary, the steward, the man of confidence, through whose hands all the business of the establishment passed; and a single glance at that stupidly solemn face, that vague expression, that Turkish fez poised awkwardly on that village schoolmaster's head, sufficed to convince one what manner of man he was to whom interests like the Nabob's had been entrusted.

Lastly, to fill the gaps between the figures we have sketched, Turks of every variety! Tunisians, Moors, Egyptians, Levantines; and, mingled with that exotic element, a whole multicolored Parisian Bohemia of decayed gentlemen, squinting tradesmen, penniless journalists, inventors of strange objects, men from the South landed in Paris without a sou — all the tempest-tossed vessels to be revictualled, all the flocks of birds whirling about in the darkness, that were attracted by that great fortune as by the light of a lighthouse. The Nabob received that motley crew at his table through kindness of heart, generosity, weakness, and entire lack of dignity, combined with absolute ignorance, and partly as a result of the same exile's melancholy, the same need of expansion that led him to receive, in his magnificent palace on the Bardo in Tunis, everybody who landed from France, from the petty tradesman and exporter of small wares, to the famous pianist on a tour and the consul-general.

Listening to those different voices, those foreign accents, incisive or stammering, glancing at those

varying types of countenance, some uncivilized, passionate, unrefined, others over-civilized, faded, of the type that haunts the boulevards, over-ripe as it were, and observing the same varieties in the corps of servants, where "flunkeys," taken the day before from some office, insolent fellows, with the heads of dentists or bath-attendants, bustled about among the motionless Ethiopians, who shone like black marble torch-holders, — it was impossible to say exactly where you were; at all events, you would never have believed that you were on Place Vendôme, at the very heart and centre of the life of our modern Paris. On the table there was a similar outlandish collection of foreign dishes, sauces with saffron or anchovies, elaborately spiced Turkish delicacies, chickens with fried almonds; all this, taken in conjunction with the commonplace decorations of the room, the gilded wainscotings and the shrill jangle of the new bells, gave one the impression of a table-d'hôte in some great hotel in Smyrna or Calcutta, or of the gorgeous saloon of a trans-Atlantic liner, the *Péreire* or the *Sinai*.

It would seem that such a variety of guests — I had almost said of passengers — would make the repast animated and noisy. Far from it. They all ate nervously, in silence, watching one another out of the corner of the eye; and even the most worldly, those who seemed most at ease, had in their eyes the wandering, distressed expression indicating a persistent thought, a feverish anxiety which caused them to speak without answering, to listen without understanding a word of what was said.

Suddenly the door of the dining-room was thrown open.

"Ah! there 's Jenkins," exclaimed the Nabob, joyfully. "Hail, doctor, hail! How are you, my boy?"

A circular smile, a vigorous handshake for the host, and Jenkins took his seat opposite him, beside Monpavon and in front of a plate which a servant brought in hot haste, exactly as at a table-d'hôte. Amid those preoccupied, feverish faces, that one presented a striking contrast with its good-humor, its expansive smile, and the loquacious, flattering affability which makes the Irish to a certain extent the Gascons of Great Britain. And what a robust appetite! with what energy, what liberty of conscience, he managed his double row of white teeth, talking all the while.

"Well, Jansoulet, did you read it?"

"Read what, pray?"

"What! don't you know? Have n't you read what the *Messager* said about you this morning?"

Beneath the thick tan on his cheeks the Nabob blushed like a child, and his eyes sparkled with delight as he replied:

"Do you mean it? The *Messager* said something about me?"

"Two whole columns. How is it that Moëssard did n't show it to you?"

"Oh!" said Moëssard modestly, "it was n't worth the trouble."

He was a journalist in a small way, fair-haired and spruce, a pretty fellow enough, but with a face

marked by the faded look peculiar to waiters at all-night restaurants, actors and prostitutes, made up of conventional grimaces and the sallow reflection of the gas. He was reputed to be the plighted lover of an exiled queen of very easy virtue. That rumor was whispered about wherever he went, and gave him an envied and most contemptible prominence in his circle.

Jansoulet insisted upon reading the article, being impatient to hear what was said of him. Unfortunately Jenkins had left his copy at the duke's.

"Let some one go at once and get me a *Messager*," said the Nabob to the servant behind his chair.

Moëssard interposed:

"That is n't necessary; I must have the thing about me."

And with the free and easy manner of the tap-room habitué, of the reporter who scrawls his notes as he sits in front of his mug of beer, the journalist produced a pocketbook stuffed with memoranda, stamped papers, newspaper clippings, notes on glossy paper with crests — which he scattered over the table, pushing his plate away, to look for the proof of his article.

"Here it is." He passed it to Jansoulet; but Jenkins cried out:

"No, no, read it aloud."

As the whole party echoed the demand, Moëssard took back his proof and began to read aloud the WORK OF BETHLEHEM AND M. BERNARD JANSOULET, a long deliverance in favor of artificial

nursing, written from Jenkins' notes, which were recognizable by certain grandiloquent phrases of the sort that the Irishman affected: "the long martyrology of infancy — the venality of the breast —the goat, the beneficent nurse," — and concluding, after a turgid description of the magnificent establishment at Nanterre, with a eulogy of Jenkins and the glorification of Jansoulet: "O Bernard Jansoulet, benefactor of infancy!"

You should have seen the annoyed, scandalized faces of the guests. What a schemer that Moëssard was! What impudent sycophancy! And the same envious, disdainful smile distorted every mouth. The devil of it was that they were forced to applaud, to appear enchanted, as their host's sense of smell was not surfeited by the odor of incense, and as he took everything very seriously, both the article and the applause that it called forth. His broad face beamed during the reading. Many and many a time, far away in Africa, he had dreamed of being thus belauded in the Parisian papers, of becoming a person of some consequence in that society, the first of all societies, upon which the whole world has its eyes fixed as upon a beacon-light. Now that dream was fulfilled. He gazed at all those men around his table, at that sumptuous dessert, at that wainscoted dining-room, certainly as high as the church in his native village; he listened to the dull roar of Paris, rumbling and tramping beneath his windows, with the unspoken thought that he was about to become a great wheel in that ever-active, complicated mechanism. And

thereupon, while he sat, enjoying the sense of well-being that follows a substantial meal, between the lines of that triumphant apology he evoked, by way of contrast, the panorama of his own life, his wretched childhood, his haphazard youth, no less distressing to recall, the days without food, the nights without a place to lay his head. And suddenly, when the reading was at an end, in the midst of a veritable overflow of joy, of one of those outbursts of Southern effusiveness which compel one to think aloud, he cried, protruding his thick lips toward the guests in his genial smile:

"Ah! my friends, my dear friends, if you knew how happy I am, how proud I feel!"

It was barely six weeks since he landed in France. With the exception of two or three compatriots, he had known these men whom he called his friends hardly more than a day, and only from having loaned them money. Wherefore that sudden expansiveness seemed decidedly strange; but Jansoulet, too deeply moved to notice anything, continued:

"After what I have just heard, when I see myself here in this great city of Paris, surrounded by all the illustrious names and distinguished minds within its limits, and then recall my father's peddler's stall! For I was born in a peddler's stall. My father sold old iron at a street corner in Bourg-Saint-Andéol! It was as much as ever if we had bread to eat every day, and stew every Sunday. Ask Cabassu. He knew me in those days. He can tell you if I am lying. Oh! yes, I have

known what poverty is." He raised his head in an outburst of pride, breathing in the odor of truffles with which the heavy atmosphere was impregnated. "I have known poverty, genuine poverty too, and for a long time. I have been cold, I have been hungry, and horribly hungry, you know, the kind of hunger that makes you stupid, that twists your stomach, makes your head go round, and prevents you from seeing, just as if some one had dug out the inside of your eyes with an oyster-knife. I have passed whole days in bed for lack of a coat to wear; lucky when I had a bed, which I sometimes had n't. I have tried to earn my bread at every trade; and the bread cost me so much suffering, it was so hard and tough that I still have the bitter, mouldy taste of it in my mouth. And that 's the way it was till I was thirty years old. Yes, my friends, at thirty — and I 'm not fifty yet — I was still a beggar, without a sou, with no future, with my heart full of remorse for my poor mother who was dying of hunger in her hovel down in the provinces, and to whom I could give nothing."

The faces of the people who surrounded that strange host as he told the story of his evil days were a curious spectacle. Some seemed disgusted, especially Monpavon. That display of old rags seemed to him in execrable taste, and to denote utter lack of breeding. Cardailhac, that sceptic and man of refined taste, a foe to all emotional scenes, sat with staring eyes and as if hypnotized, cutting a piece of fruit with the end of his fork into

strips as thin as cigarette papers. The Governor, on the contrary, went through a pantomime expressive of perfunctory admiration, with exclamations of horror and compassion; while, in striking contrast to him, and not far away, Brahim Bey, the thunderbolt of war, in whom the reading of the article, followed by discussion after a substantial repast, had induced a refreshing nap, was sleeping soundly, with his mouth like a round O in his white moustache, and with the blood congested in his face as a result of the creeping up of his gorget. But the general expression was indifference and ennui. What interest had they, I ask you, in Jansoulet's childhood at Bourg-Saint-Andéol, in what he had suffered, and how he had been driven from pillar to post? They had not come there for such stuff as that. So it was that expressions of feigned interest, eyes that counted the eggs in the ceiling or the crumbs of bread on the table-cloth, lips tightly compressed to restrain a yawn, betrayed the general impatience caused by that untimely narrative. But he did not grow weary. He took pleasure in the recital of his past suffering, as the sailor in a safe haven delights in recalling his voyages in distant seas, and the dangers, and the terrible shipwrecks. Next came the tale of his good luck, the extraordinary accident that suddenly started him on the road to fortune. "I was wandering about the harbor of Marseille, with a comrade as out-at-elbows as myself, who also made his fortune in the Bey's service, and, after being my chum, my partner, became my bitterest

enemy. I can safely tell you his name, *pardi!* He is well enough known, Hemerlingue. Yes, messieurs, the head of the great banking-house of Hemerlingue and Son had n't at that time the money to buy two sous' worth of crabs on the quay. Intoxicated by the air of travel that you breathe in those parts, it occurred to us to go and seek a living in some sunny country, as the foggy countries were so cruel to us. But where should we go? We did what sailors sometimes do to decide what den they shall squander their wages in. They stick a bit of paper on the rim of a hat. Then they twirl the hat on a cane, and when it stops, they go in the direction in which the paper points. For us the paper needle pointed to Tunis. A week later I landed at Tunis with half a louis in my pocket, and I return to-day with twenty-five millions."

There was a sort of electric shock around the table, a gleam in every eye, even in those of the servants. Cardailhac exclaimed: "Mazette!" Monpavon's nose subsided.

"Yes, my children, twenty-five millions in available funds, to say nothing of all that I've left in Tunis, my two palaces on the Bardo, my vessels in the harbor of La Goulette, my diamonds and my jewels, which are certainly worth more than twice that. And you know," he added, with his genial smile, in his hoarse, unmusical voice, "when it's all gone, there will still be some left."

The whole table rose, electrified.

"Bravo! Ah! bravo!"

"Superb."

"Very *chic* — very *chic*."

"Well said."

"A man like that ought to be in the Chamber."

"He shall be, *per Bacco!* my word for it," exclaimed the Governor, in a voice of thunder; and, carried away by admiration, not knowing how to manifest his enthusiasm, he seized the Nabob's great hairy hand and impulsively put it to his lips. Everybody was standing; they did not resume their seats.

Jansoulet, radiant with pleasure, had also risen.

"Let us have our coffee," he said, throwing down his napkin.

Immediately the party circulated noisily through the salons, enormous rooms, in which the light, the decoration, the magnificence consisted of gold alone. It fell from the ceiling in blinding rays, oozed from the walls in fillets, window-sashes and frames of all sorts. One retained a little of it on one's hands after moving a chair or opening a window; and even the hangings, having been dipped in that Pactolus, preserved upon their stiff folds the rigidity and sheen of metal. But there was nothing individual, homelike, dainty. It was the monotonous splendor of the furnished apartment. And this impression of a flying camp, of a temporary establishment, was heightened by the idea of travelling that hovered about that fortune drawn from distant sources, like a cloud of uncertainty or a threat.

The coffee was served in the Oriental fashion,

with all the grounds, in small filigreed silver cups, and the guests stood around in groups, drinking hastily, burning their tongues, watching one another furtively, and keeping especially close watch on the Nabob, in order to grasp the favorable moment to jump upon him, drag him into a corner of one of those huge rooms, and arrange their loan at last. For it was that for which they had been waiting for two hours, that was the object of their visit, and the fixed idea that gave them that distraught, falsely attentive air, during the breakfast. But now there was no more embarrassment, no more grimacing. Everybody in that strange company knew that, in the Nabob's crowded existence, the coffee hour alone was left free for confidential audiences, and as every one wished to take advantage of it, as they had all come for the purpose of tearing a handful of wool from that golden fleece which offered itself to them so good-naturedly, they no longer talked or listened, they attended strictly to business.

Honest Jenkins is the one who begins. He has led his friend Jansoulet into a window-recess and is submitting to him the drawings for the house at Nanterre. A pretty outlay, by heaven! One hundred and fifty thousand francs for the property, and, in addition, the very considerable expense of installation, the staff, the bedding, the goats for nurses, the manager's carriage, the omnibuses to meet the children at every train. A great deal of money — But how comfortable the dear little creatures will be there! what a service to Paris,

to mankind! The Government cannot fail to reward with a bit of red ribbon such unselfish philanthropy. "The Cross, the 15th of August." With those magic words Jenkins can obtain whatever he wants. With his hoarse, cheerful voice, which seems to be hailing a vessel in the fog, the Nabob calls, "Bompain." The man in the fez, tearing himself away from the cellaret, crosses the salon majestically, whispers, goes away and returns with an inkstand and a check-book, the leaves of which come out and fly away of themselves. What a fine thing is wealth! To sign a check for two hundred thousand francs on his knee costs Jansoulet no more than to take a louis from his pocket.

The others, with their noses in their cups and rage in their hearts, watch this little scene from afar. And when Jenkins takes his leave, bright and smiling, and waving his hand to the different groups, Monpavon seizes the Governor: "Now, it's our turn." And they pounce together upon the Nabob, lead him to a divan, force him to sit down, and squeeze him between them with a savage little laugh that seems to mean: "What are we going to do to him?" Extract money from him, as much of it as possible. It must be had in order to float the *Caisse Territoriale*, which has been aground for years, buried in sand to her masthead. A magnificent operation, this of floating her again, if we are to believe these two gentlemen; for the buried craft is full of ingots, of valuable merchandise, of the thousand varied treasures of a new country of which every one is talking and of which no one

knows anything. The aim of Paganetti of Porto-Vecchio in founding that unrivalled establishment was to monopolize the exploitation of Corsica: iron mines, sulphur mines, copper mines, marble quarries, chalybeate and sulphur springs, vast forests of lignum vitæ and oak; and to facilitate that exploitation by building a network of railroads throughout the island, and establishing a line of steamboats. Such was the gigantic enterprise to which he has harnessed himself. He has sunk a large amount of money in it, and the new-comer, the laborer of the eleventh hour, will reap the whole profit.

While the Corsican with his Italian accent, his frantic gestures, enumerates the *splendores* of the affair, Monpavon, dignified and haughty, nods his head with an air of conviction, and from time to time, when he deems the moment propitious, tosses into the conversation the name of the Duc de Mora, which always produces its effect on the Nabob.

"Well, what is it that you need?"

"Millions," says Monpavon superbly, in the tone of a man who is not embarrassed by any lack of persons to whom to apply. "Yes, millions. But it's a magnificent opening. And, as His Excellency said, it would afford a capitalist an opportunity to attain a lofty position, even a political position. Just consider a moment! in that penniless country. One might become a member of the General Council, a Deputy —" The Nabob starts. And little Paganetti, feeling the bait tremble on his hook, continues: "Yes, a Deputy; you shall be

one when I choose. At a word from me all Corsica is at your service." Thereupon he launches out on a bewildering extemporization, counting up the votes at his disposal, the cantons which will rise at his summons. "You bring me your funds — I give you a whole people." The affair is carried by storm.

"Bompain! Bompain!" calls the Nabob in his enthusiasm. He has but one fear, that the thing will escape him; and to bind Paganetti, who does not conceal his need of money, he hastens to pour a first instalment into the *Caisse Territoriale.* Second appearance of the man in the red cap with the check-book, which he holds solemnly against his breast, like a choir-boy carrying the Gospel. Second affixture of Jansoulet's signature to a check, which the Governor stows away with a negligent air, and which effects a sudden transformation of his whole person. Paganetti, but now so humble and unobtrusive, walks away with the self-assurance of a man held in equilibrium by four hundred thousand francs, while Monpavon, carrying his head even higher than usual, follows close upon his heels and watches over him with a more than paternal solicitude.

"There 's a good stroke of business well done," says the Nabob to himself, "and I 'll go and drink my coffee." But ten borrowers are lying in wait for him. The quickest, the most adroit, is Cardailhac, the manager, who hooks him and carries him off into an empty salon. "Let us talk a bit, my good friend. I must set before you the condition

of our theatre." A very complicated condition, no doubt; for here comes Monsieur Bompain again, and more sky-blue leaves fly away from the check-book. Now, whose turn is it? The journalist Moëssard comes to get his pay for the article in the *Messager;* the Nabob will learn what it costs to be called "the benefactor of infancy" in the morning papers. The provincial curé asks for funds to rebuild his church, and takes his check by assault with the brutality of a Peter the Hermit. And now old Schwalbach approaches, with his nose in his beard, winking mysteriously. "Sh! he has vound ein bearl," for monsieur's gallery, an Hobbema from the Duc de Mora's collection. But several people have their eye on it. It will be difficult to obtain. "I must have it at any price," says the Nabob, allured by the name of Mora. "You understand, Schwalbach, I must have that *Nobbema.* Twenty thousand francs for you if you hit it off."

"I vill do mein best, Monsieur Jansoulet."

And the old knave, as he turns away, calculates that the Nabob's twenty thousand, added to the ten thousand the duke has promised him if he gets rid of his picture, will make a very pretty little profit for him.

While these fortunate ones succeed one another, others prowl about frantic with impatience, biting their nails to the quick; for one and all have come with the same object. From honest Jenkins, who headed the procession, down to Cabassu, the *masseur,* who closes it, one and all lead the Nabob

aside. But however far away they take him in that long file of salons, there is always some indiscreet mirror to reflect the figure of the master of the house, and the pantomime of his broad back. That back is so eloquent! At times it straightens up indignantly. "Oh! no, that is too much!" Or else it collapses with comical resignation. "Very well, if you will have it so." And Bompain's fez always lurking in some corner of the landscape.

When these have finished, others arrive; they are the small fish that follow in the wake of the great sharks in the savage hunting in the sea. There is constant going and coming through those superb white and gold salons, a slamming of doors, an unbroken current of insolent extortion of the most hackneyed type, attracted from the four corners of Paris and the suburbs by that enormous fortune and that incredible gullibility.

For these small sums, this incessant doling out of cash, he did not have recourse to the checkbook. In one of his salons the Nabob kept a commode, an ugly little piece of furniture representing the savings of some concierge; it was the first article Jansoulet bought when he was in a position to renounce furnished apartments, and he had kept it ever since like a gambler's fetish; its three drawers always contained two hundred thousand francs in current funds. He resorted to that never-failing supply on the days of his great audiences, ostentatiously plunging his hands in the gold and silver, stuffing it into his pockets to produce it later with the gesture of a cattle-dealer, a certain

vulgar way of raising the skirts of his coat and sending his hand "down to the bottom of the pile." A tremendous inroad must have been made upon the little drawers to-day.

After so many whispered conferences, requests more or less clearly stated, anxious entrances and triumphant exits, the last client dismissed, the commode drawers locked, the apartment on Place Vendôme was left in solitude in the fading light of four o'clock, the close of the November days which are prolonged so far beyond that hour by the aid of artificial light. The servants removed the coffee cups, the *raki* and the open, half-emptied boxes of cigars. The Nabob, thinking that he was alone, drew a long breath of relief: "Ouf! that's all over." But no. A figure emerges from a corner already in shadow, and approaches with a letter in his hand.

"Another!"

Thereupon the poor man instinctively repeated his eloquent horse-dealer's gesture. At that the visitor, also instinctively, recoiled so quickly and with such an insulted air that the Nabob realized that he was in error and took the trouble to observe the young man who stood before him, simply but correctly dressed, with a sallow complexion, absolutely no beard; regular features, perhaps a little too serious and determined for his years, which fact, with his extremely light hair, curling tightly all over his head like a powdered wig, gave him the aspect of a young deputy of the Tiers État

under Louis XVI., the face of a Barnave at twenty. That face, although the Nabob then saw it for the first time, was not altogether unfamiliar to him.

"What do you wish, monsieur?"

Taking the letter the young man handed him, he walked to a window to read it.

"Ah! — it's from mamma."

He said it with such a joyous inflection, the word "mamma" lighted his whole face with such a youthful, attractive smile, that the visitor, repelled at first by the parvenu's vulgar appearance, felt in full sympathy with him.

The Nabob read in an undertone these few lines written in a coarse, incorrect, trembling hand, in striking contrast to the fine laid paper with the words "Château de Saint-Romans" at the top.

"My Dear Son, — This letter will be handed to you by the oldest of Monsieur de Géry's children, the former justice of the peace at Bourg-Saint-Andéol, who was so kind to us — "

The Nabob interrupted himself to say:

"I ought to have known you, Monsieur de Géry. You look like your father. Take a seat, I beg you."

Then he finished running through the letter. His mother made no precise request, but, in the name of the services the de Géry family had formerly rendered them, she commended Monsieur Paul to him. An orphan, with his two young brothers to support, he had been admitted to practice as an advocate in the South and was starting for Paris to seek his fortune. She implored

Jansoulet to assist him, "for he sorely needed it, poor fellow." And she signed: "Your mother, who is dying for a sight of you, FRANÇOISE."

That letter from his mother, whom he had not seen for six years, the Southern forms of expression in which he recognized familiar intonations, the coarse handwriting which drew for him a beloved face, all wrinkled and sunburned and furrowed, but smiling still beneath a peasant's cap, made a profound impression upon the Nabob. During the six weeks he had been in France, immersed in the eddying whirl of Paris, of his installation, he had not once thought of the dear old soul; and now he saw her in every line. He stood for a moment gazing at the letter, which shook in his fat fingers.

Then, his emotion having subsided, "Monsieur de Géry," he said, "I am happy to have the opportunity to repay a little of the kindness your family has showered upon mine. This very day, if you agree, I take you into my service. You are well educated, you seem intelligent, you can be of very great service to me. I have innumerable plans, innumerable matters in hand. I have been drawn into a multitude of large industrial undertakings. I need some one to assist me, to take my place at need. To be sure, I have a secretary, a steward, that excellent Bompain; but the poor fellow knows nothing of Paris. You will say that you are fresh from the provinces. But that's of no consequence. Well educated as you are, a Southerner, open-eyed and adaptable, you will

soon get the hang of the boulevard. At all events, I 'll undertake your education in that direction myself. In a few weeks you shall have a foot as thoroughly Parisian as mine, I promise you."

Poor man! It was touching to hear him talk about his *Parisian foot* and his experience, when he was fated never to be more than a beginner.

"Well, it's a bargain, eh? I take you for my secretary. You shall have a fixed salary which we will agree upon directly; and I will give you a chance to make your fortune quickly."

And as de Géry, suddenly relieved of all his anxieties as a new-comer, a petitioner, a neophyte, did not stir for fear of waking from a dream, the Nabob added in a softer tone:

"Now come and sit here by me, and let us talk a little about mamma."

III.

MEMOIRS OF A CLERK.—A CASUAL GLANCE AT THE "CAISSE TERRITORIALE."

I HAD just finished my humble morning meal, and, as my custom is, had bestowed the balance of my provisions in the safe in the directors' room, a magnificent safe with a secret lock, which has served as my pantry during the four years, or nearly that, of my employment in the *Territoriale;* suddenly the Governor enters the office, red as a turkey-cock, his eyes inflamed as if he were fresh from a feast, breathing noisily, and says to me in vulgar phrase, with his Italian accent:

"There 's a horrible smell here, *Moussiou* Passajon."

There was not a horrible smell, if you please. But — shall I say it? — I had sent out for a few onions to put around a bit of knuckle of veal, brought down to me by Mademoiselle Séraphine, the cook on the second floor, whose accounts I write up every evening. I tried to explain to the Governor; but he worked himself into a rage, saying that in his opinion there was no sense in poisoning offices in that way, and that it was n't worth

while to pay twelve thousand francs a year for a suite of rooms with eight windows on the front, in the best part of Boulevard Malesherbes, to cook onions in. I don't know what he did n't say to me in his effervescent state. For my part, I was naturally vexed to be spoken to in that insolent tone. The least one can do is to be polite to people whom one neglects to pay, deuce take it! So I retorted that it was too bad, really; but, if the *Caisse Territoriale* would pay what they owe me, to wit my arrears of salary for four years, plus seven thousand francs advanced by me to the Governor to pay for carriages, newspapers, cigars and American drinks on the days the council met, I would go and eat like a Christian at the nearest cheap alehouse, and should not be reduced to cooking for myself, in the directors' room, a wretched stew which I owed to the public compassion of cooks. And there you are!

In speaking thus I gave way to an indignant impulse very excusable in the eyes of anybody who is acquainted with my position here. However, I had said nothing unseemly, but had kept within the limits of language suited to my age and education. (I must have stated somewhere in these memoirs that I passed more than thirty of my sixty-five years as apparitor to the Faculty of Letters at Dijon. Hence my taste for reports and memoirs, and those notions of academic style of which traces will be found in many passages of this lucubration.) I had, I repeat, expressed myself to the Governor with the greatest reserve, refraining from

employing any of those insulting words with which every one here regales him during the day, from our two censors, M. de Monpavon, who laughingly calls him *Fleur-de-Mazas*, whenever he comes here, and M. de Bois-l'Héry of the Trompettes Club, who is as vulgar in his language as a groom, and always says to him by way of adieu: "To your wooden bed, flea!" From those two down to our cashier, whom I have heard say to him a hundred times, tapping his ledger: "There's enough in here to send you to the galleys whenever I choose." And yet, for all that, my simple observation produced a most extraordinary effect upon him. The circles around his eyes turned bright yellow, and he said, trembling with anger, the wicked anger of his country: "Passajon, you're a blackguard! One word more and I discharge you." I was struck dumb with amazement. Discharge me — me! And what about my four years' arrears, and my seven thousand francs of advances! As if he read my thoughts as they entered my head, the Governor replied that all the accounts were to be settled, including mine. "By the way," he added, "just call all the clerks to my office. I have some great news to tell them." With that he entered his office and slammed the door behind him.

That devil of a man! No matter how well you may know him, know what a liar he is and what an actor, he always finds a way to put you off with his palaver. My account! Why, I was so excited that my legs ran away with me while I was going about to notify the staff.

Theoretically there are twelve of us at the *Caisse Territoriale*, including the Governor and the dandy Moëssard, manager of the *Vérité Financière;* but really there are less than half that number. In the first place, since the *Vérité* ceased to appear — that was two years ago — M. Moëssard has n't once set foot inside our doors. It seems that he is swimming in honors and wealth, that he has for a dear friend a queen, a real queen, who gives him all the money he wants. Oh! what a Babylon this Paris is! The others look in occasionally to see if by chance there is anything new at the *Caisse;* and, as there never is, weeks pass without our seeing them. Four or five faithful ones, poor old fellows all, like myself, persist in appearing regularly every morning, at the same hour, as a matter of habit, because they have nothing else to do, and are at a loss to know what to turn their hand to; but they all busy themselves with matters that have no connection whatever with the office. One must live, there 's no doubt of that! And then a man cannot pass his day lounging from chair to chair, from window to window, to look out (eight front windows on the boulevard). So we try to get such work as we can. For my part, I write for Mademoiselle Séraphine and another cook in the house. Then I write up my memoirs, which takes no small amount of time. Our receiving teller — there 's a fellow who has n't a very laborious task with us — makes netting for a house that deals in fishermen's supplies. One of our two copyists, who writes a beautiful hand, copies plays

for a dramatic agency; the other makes little toys worth a sou, which are sold by hucksters at the street corners toward New Year's Day, and in that way succeeds in keeping himself from starving to death the rest of the year. Our cashier is the only one who does no outside work. He would think that he had forfeited his honor. He is a very proud man, who never complains, and whose only fear is that he may seem to be short of linen. Locked into his office, he employs his time from morning till night, making shirt-fronts, collars and cuffs out of paper. He has attained very great skill, and his linen, always dazzlingly white, would deceive any one, were it not that, at the slightest movement, when he walks, when he sits down, it cracks as if he had a pasteboard box in his stomach. Unluckily all that paper does not feed him; and he is so thin, he has such a gaunt look, that one wonders what he can live on. Between ourselves, I suspect him of sometimes paying a visit to my pantry. That's an easy matter for him; for, in his capacity of cashier, he has the "word" that opens the secret lock, and I fancy that, when my back is turned, he does a little foraging among my supplies.

Surely this is a most extraordinary, incredible banking-house. And yet what I am writing is the solemn truth, and Paris is full of financial establishments of the same sort as ours. Ah! if I ever publish my memoirs. But let me take up the interrupted thread of my narrative.

When we were all assembled in his office, the manager said to us with great solemnity:

"Messieurs and dear comrades, the time of our trials is at an end. The *Caisse Territoriale* is entering upon a new phase of its existence."

With that he began to tell us about a superb *combinazione* — that is his favorite word, and he says it in such an insinuating tone! — a *combinazione* in which the famous Nabob of whom all the papers are talking is to have a part. Thus the *Caisse Territoriale* would be able to discharge its obligation to its loyal servants, to reward those who had shown devotion to its service and lop off those who were useless. This last for me, I imagine. And finally: "Make up your accounts. They will all be settled to-morrow." Unfortunately he has so often soothed our feelings with lying words that his discourse produced no effect. Formerly those fine promises of his always succeeded. On the announcement of a new *combinazione*, we used to caper about and weep with joy in the offices, and embrace one another like shipwrecked sailors at sight of a sail.

Everyone prepared his account for the next day, as he had told us. But the next day, no Governor. The next day but one, still no Governor. He had gone on a little journey.

At last, when we were all together, exasperated beyond measure, putting out our tongues, crazy for the water that he had held to our mouths, the Governor arrived, dropped into a chair, hid his face in his hands, and, before we had time to speak to him, exclaimed: "Kill me, kill me! I am a miserable impostor. The *combinazione* has fallen

through. *Pechero!* the *combinazione* has fallen through!" And he cried and sobbed, threw himself on his knees, tore out his hair by handfuls and rolled on the carpet; he called us all by our nicknames, begged us to take his life, spoke of his wife and children, whom he had utterly ruined. And not one of us had the courage to complain in the face of such despair. What do I say? We ended by sharing it. No, never since theatres existed, has there been such an actor. But to-day, it is all over, our confidence has departed. When he had gone everybody gave a shrug. I must confess, however, that for a moment I was shaken. The assurance with which he talked about discharging me, and the name of the Nabob, who was so wealthy —

"Do you believe that?" said the cashier. "Why, you'll always be an innocent, my poor Passajon. Never you fear! The Nabob's in it just about as much as Moëssard's queen was."

And he went back to his shirt-fronts.

His last remark referred back to the time when Moëssard was paying court to his queen and had promised the Governor that, in case he was successful, he would induce Her Majesty to invest some funds in our enterprise. All of us in the office were informed of that new prospect and deeply interested, as you may imagine, in its speedy realization, since our money depended on it. For two months that fable kept us in breathless suspense. We were consumed with anxiety, we scrutinized Moëssard's face; we thought that the effects

of his association with the lady were very visible there; and our old cashier, with his proud, serious air, would reply gravely from behind his grating, when we questioned him on the subject: "There 's nothing new," or: "The affair 's in good shape." With that everybody was content and we said to each other: "It 's coming along, it 's coming along," as if it were a matter in the ordinary course of business. No, upon my word, Paris is the only place in the world where such things can be seen. It positively makes one's head spin sometimes. The upshot of it was that, one fine morning, Moëssard stopped coming to the office. He had succeeded, it seems; but the *Caisse Territoriale* did not seem to him a sufficiently advantageous investment for his dear friend's funds. That was honorable, was n't it?

However, the sentiment of honor is so easily lost that one can scarcely believe it. When I think that I, Passajon, with my white hair, my venerable appearance, my spotless past — thirty years of academic service — have accustomed myself to living amid these infamies and base intrigues like a fish in water! One may well ask what I am doing here, why I remain here, how I happened to come here.

How did I happen to come here? Oh! bless your soul, in the simplest way you can imagine. Nearly four years ago, my wife being dead and my children married, I had just accepted my retiring pension as apparitor to the Faculty, when an advertisement in the newspaper happened to

come to my notice. "WANTED, a clerk of mature age at the *Caisse Territoriale*, 56 Boulevard Malesherbes. Good references." Let me make a confession at once. The modern Babylon had always tempted me. And then I felt that I was still vigorous, I could see ten active years before me, during which I might earn a little money, much perhaps, by investing my savings in the banking-house I was about to enter. So I wrote, inclosing my photograph by Crespon, Place du Marché, in which I am represented with a clean-shaven chin, a bright eye under my heavy white eyebrows, wearing my steel chain around my neck, my insignia as an academic official, "with the air of a conscript father on his curule chair!" as our dean, M. Chalmette, used to say. (Indeed he declared that I looked very much like the late Louis XVIII., only not so heavy.)

So I furnished the best of references, the most flattering recommendations from the gentlemen of the Faculty. By return mail the Governor answered my letter to the effect that my face pleased him — I should think so, *parbleu!* a reception room guarded by an imposing countenance like mine is a tempting bait to the investor, — and that I might come when I chose. I ought, you will tell me, to have made inquiries on my own account. Oh! of course I ought. But I had so much information to furnish about myself that it never occurred to me to ask them for any about themselves. Moreover, how could one have a feeling of distrust after seeing these superb quar-

ters, these lofty ceilings, these strong-boxes, as large as wardrobes, and these mirrors in which you can see yourself from head to foot? And then the sonorous prospectuses, the millions that I heard flying through the air, the colossal enterprises with fabulous profits. I was dazzled, fascinated. I must say, also, that at that time the establishment had a very different look from that it has to-day. Certainly affairs were going badly — they have always gone badly, have our affairs — and the journal appeared only at irregular intervals. But one of the Governor's little *combinazioni* enabled him to save appearances.

He had conceived the idea, if you please, of opening a patriotic subscription to erect a statue to General Paolo Paoli, a great man of his country. The Corsicans are not rich, but they are as vain as turkeys. So money poured into the *Territoriale.* But unfortunately it did not last. In two months the statue was devoured, before it was erected, and the succession of protests and summonses began again. To-day I am used to it. But when I first came from my province, the notices posted by order of the court, the bailiffs at the door, made a painful impression upon me. Inside, no attention was paid to them. They knew that at the last moment a Monpavon or a Bois-l'Héry was certain to turn up to appease the bailiffs; for all those gentlemen, being deeply involved in the affair, are interested to avoid a failure. That is just what saves our evil-minded little Governor. The others run after their money —

everyone knows what that means in gambling — and they would not be pleased to know that all the shares they have in their hands are worth nothing more than their weight as old paper.

From the smallest to the greatest, all of us in the house are in that plight. From the landlord, to whom we owe two years' rent and who keeps us on for nothing for fear of losing it all, down to us poor clerks, to myself, who am in for seven thousand francs of savings and my four years' back pay, we are all running after our money. That is why I persist in remaining here.

Doubtless, notwithstanding my advanced age, I might have succeeded, by favor of my education, my general appearance and the care I have always taken of my clothes, in getting a place in some other office. There is a very honorable person of my acquaintance, M. Joyeuse, bookkeeper for Hemerlingue and Son, the great bankers on Rue Saint-Honoré, who never fails to say to me whenever he meets me:

"Passajon, my boy, don't stay in that den of thieves. You make a mistake in staying on there; you 'll never get a sou out of it. Come to Hemerlingue's. I 'll undertake to find some little corner for you. You will earn less, but you 'll receive very much more."

I feel that he is right, the honest fellow. But it's stronger than I am, I cannot make up my mind to go. And yet this is not a cheerful life that I lead here in these great cold rooms where no one ever comes, where every one slinks into a

corner without speaking. What would you have? We know one another too well, that 's the whole of it. Up to last year we had meetings of the council of supervision, meetings of stockholders, stormy, uproarious meetings, genuine battles of savages, whose yells could be heard at the Madeleine. And subscribers used to come too, several times a week, indignant because they had never heard anything from their money. Those were the times when our Governor came out strong. I have seen people go into his office, monsieur, as fierce as wolves thirsty for blood, and come out, after a quarter of an hour, milder than sheep, satisfied, reassured, and their pockets comforted with a few bank-notes. For there was the cunning of the thing: to ruin with money the poor wretches who came to demand it. To-day the shareholders of the *Caisse Territoriale* never stir. I think that they are all dead or resigned to their fate. The council never meets. We have sessions only on paper; it is my duty to make up a so-called balance-sheet — always the same—of which I make a fresh copy every three months. We never see a living soul, except that at rare intervals some subscriber to the Paoli statue drops down on us from the wilds of Corsica, anxious to know if the monument is progressing; or perhaps some devout reader of the *Vérité Financière*, which disappeared more than two years ago, comes with an air of timidity to renew his subscription, and requests that it be forwarded a little more regularly, if possible. There is a confidence which nothing weakens. When one of those innocent

creatures falls in the midst of our half-starved band, it is something terrible. We surround him, we embrace him, we try to get his name on one of our lists, and, in case he resists, if he will subscribe neither to the Paoli monument nor to the Corsican railways, then those gentry perform what they call — my pen blushes to write it — what they call "the drayman trick."

This is how it is done: we always have in the office a package prepared beforehand, a box tied with stout string which arrives, presumably from some railway station, while the visitor is there. "Twenty francs cartage," says the one of us who brings in the package. (Twenty francs, or sometimes thirty, according to the victim's appearance.) Every one at once begins to fumble in his pockets: "Twenty francs cartage! I have n't it." — "Nor I." What luck! Some one runs to the counting-room. Closed! They look for the cashier. Gone out! And the hoarse voice of the drayman waxing impatient in the ante-room: "Come, come, make haste." (I am generally selected for the drayman's part, because of my voice.) What is to be done? Send back the package? the Governor won't like that. "Messieurs, I beg you to allow me," the innocent victim ventures to observe, opening his purse. — "Ah! monsieur, if you would." — He pays his twenty francs, we escort him to the door, and as soon as his back is turned we divide the fruit of the crime, laughing like brigands.

Fie! Monsieur Passajon. Such performances at your time of life! Oh! *Mon Dieu!* I know all

about it. I know that I should honor myself much more if I left this vile place. But, what then? why, I must abandon all that I have at stake here. No, it is not possible. It is urgently necessary that I remain, that I keep a close watch, that I am always on hand to have the advantage of a windfall, if one should come. Oh! I swear by my ribbon, by my thirty years of academic service, if ever an affair like this of the Nabob makes it possible for me to recoup my losses, I will not wait a moment, I will take myself off in hot haste to look after my little vineyard near Monbars, cured forever of my speculative ideas. But alas! that is a very chimerical hope,— played out, discredited, well known as we are on 'Change, with our shares no longer quoted at the Bourse, our obligations fast becoming waste paper, such a wilderness of falsehood and debts, and the hole that is being dug deeper and deeper. (We owe at this moment three million five hundred thousand francs. And yet that three millions is not what embarrasses us. On the other hand it is what keeps us up; but we owe the concierge a little bill of a hundred and twenty five francs for postage stamps, gas and the like. That 's the dangerous thing.) And they would have us believe that a man, a great financier like this Nabob, even though he was just from the Congo or had come from the moon this very day, is fool enough to put his money in such a trap. Nonsense! Is it possible? Tell that story elsewhere, my dear Governor.

IV.

A DÉBUT IN SOCIETY.

"MONSIEUR BERNARD JANSOULET!"

That plebeian name, proudly announced by the liveried footman in a resounding voice, rang through Jenkins's salons like the clash of cymbals, like one of the gongs that announce fantastic apparitions in a fairy play. The candles paled, flames flashed from every eye, at the dazzling prospect of Oriental treasures, of showers of pearls and sequins let fall by the magic syllables of that name, but yesterday unknown.

Yes, it was he, the Nabob, the richest of the rich, the great Parisian curiosity, flavored with that spice of adventure that is so alluring to surfeited multitudes. All heads were turned, all conversation was interrupted; there was a grand rush for the door, a pushing and jostling like that of the crowds on the quay at a seaport, to watch the arrival of a felucca with a cargo of gold.

Even the hospitable Jenkins, who was standing in the first salon to receive his guests, despite his usual self-possession abruptly left the group of men with whom he was talking and bore away to meet the galleons.

"A thousand times, a thousand times too kind. Madame Jenkins will be very happy, very proud. Come and let me take you to her."

And in his haste, in his vainglorious delight, he dragged Jansoulet away so quickly that the latter had no time to present his companion, Paul de Géry, whom he was introducing into society. The young man was well pleased to be overlooked. He glided into the mass of black coats which was forced farther and farther back by every new arrival, and was swallowed up in it, a prey to the foolish terror that every young provincial feels on his first appearance in a Parisian salon, especially when he is shrewd and intelligent and does not wear the imperturbable self-assurance of the bumpkin like a coat of mail beneath his linen buckler.

You, Parisians of Paris, who, ever since you were sixteen have exhibited your youth at the receptions of all classes of society, in your first black coat with your crush-hat on your hip,— you, I say, have no conception of that anguish, compounded of vanity, timidity and recollections of romantic books, which screws our teeth together, embarrasses our movements, makes us for a whole evening a statue between two doors, a fixture in a window-recess, a poor, pitiful, wandering creature, incapable of making his existence manifest otherwise than by changing his position from time to time, preferring to die of thirst rather than go near the sideboard, and going away without having said a word, unless we may

have stammered one of those incoherent absurdities which we remember for months, and which makes us, when we think of it at night, utter an *ah!* of frantic shame and bury our face in the pillow.

Paul de Géry was a martyr of that type. In his province he had always lived a very retired life, with a pious, melancholy old aunt, until the time when, as a student of law, originally destined for a profession in which his father had left an excellent reputation, he had been induced to frequent the salons of some of the counsellors of the court, old-fashioned, gloomy dwellings, with dingy hangings, where he made a fourth hand at whist with venerable ghosts. Jenkins' evening party was therefore a début in society for that provincial, whose very ignorance and Southern adaptability made him first of all a keen observer.

From the place where he stood he watched the interesting procession, still in progress at midnight, of Jenkins' guests, the whole body of the fashionable physician's patients; the very flower of society, a large sprinkling of politics and finance, bankers, deputies, a few artists, all the jaded ones of Parisian high life, pale and wan, with gleaming eyes, saturated with arsenic like gluttonous mice, but insatiably greedy of poison and of life. Through the open salon and the great reception-room, the doors of which had been removed, he could see the stairway and landing, profusely decorated with flowers along the sides, where the long trains were duly spread, their silky weight

seeming to force back the décolleté busts of their wearers in that graceful ascending motion which caused them to appear, little by little, until they burst upon one in the full bloom of their splendor. As the couples reached the top of the stairs they seemed to make their entrance on the stage; and that was doubly true, for every one left on the last step the frowns, the wrinkles of deep thought the air of weariness and all traces of anger or depression, to display a tranquil countenance, a smile playing over the placid features. The men exchanged hearty grasps of the hand, warm fraternal greetings; the women, thinking only of themselves, with little affected shrugs, with a charming simper and abundant play of the eyes and shoulders, murmured a few meaningless words of greeting:

"Thanks! Oh! thanks — how kind you are."

Then the couples separated, for an evening party is no longer, as it used to be, an assemblage of congenial persons, in which the wit of the women compelled the force of character, the superior knowledge, the very genius of the men to bow gracefully before it, but a too numerous mob in which the women, who alone are seated, whisper together like captives in the harem, and have no other enjoyment than that of being beautiful or of seeming to be. De Géry, after wandering through the doctor's library, the conservatory and the billiard room, where there was smoking, tired of dull, serious conversation, which seemed to him to be out of keeping in such a festal scene and in

the brief hour of pleasure — some one had asked him carelessly and without looking at him, what was doing at the Bourse that day — approached the door of the main salon, which was blockaded by a dense mass of black coats, a surging sea of heads packed closely together and gazing.

An enormous room, handsomely furnished, with the artistic taste characteristic of the master and mistress of the house. A few old pictures against the light background of the draperies. A monumental chimney-piece, decorated with a fine marble group, "The Seasons" by Sébastien Ruys, about which long green stalks, with lacelike edges, or of the stiffness of carved bronze, bent toward the mirror as toward a stream of limpid water. On the low chairs groups of women crowded together, blending the vaporous hues of their dresses, forming an immense nosegay of living flowers, above which gleamed bare white shoulders, hair studded with diamonds, drops of water on the brunettes, glistening reflections on the blondes, and the same intoxicating perfume, the same confused, pleasant buzzing, made by waves of heat and intangible wings, that caresses all the flowers in the garden in summer. At times a little laugh, ascending in that luminous atmosphere, a quicker breath, made plumes and curls tremble, and attracted attention to a lovely profile. Such was the aspect of the salon.

A few men were there, very few, all persons of distinction, laden with years and decorations, talking on the arm of a divan or leaning over the back

of a chair with the condescending air we assume in conversing with children. But amid the placid murmur of the private conversations, one voice rang out, loud and discordant, the voice of the Nabob, who was threading his way through that social conservatory with the self-assurance due to his immense fortune and a certain contempt for woman which he had brought with him from the Orient.

At that moment, sprawling upon a chair, with his great yellow-gloved hands awkwardly clasped, he was talking with a very beautiful woman, whose unusual face — much animation upon features of a severe cast — was noticeable by reason of its pallor among the surrounding pretty faces, just as her dress, all white, classic in its draping and moulded to her graceful, willowy figure, contrasted with much richer costumes, not one of which had its character of bold simplicity. De Géry, from his corner, gazed at that smooth, narrow forehead beneath the fringe of hair brushed low, those long, wide-open eyes of a deep blue, an abysmal blue, that mouth which ceased to smile only to relax its classic outline in a weary, spiritless expression. All in all, the somewhat haughty aspect of an exceptional being.

Some one near him mentioned her name — Felicia Ruys. Thereupon he understood the rare attraction of that girl, inheritress of her father's genius, whose new-born celebrity had reached as far as his province, with the halo of a reputation for great beauty. While he was gazing at her,

admiring her slightest movement, a little puzzled by the enigma presented by that beautiful face, he heard a whispered conversation behind him.

"Just see how affable she is with the Nabob! Suppose the duke should come!"

"Is the Duc de Mora expected?"

"To be sure. The party is given for him; to have him meet Jansoulet."

"And you think that the duke and Mademoiselle Ruys —"

"Where have you come from? It's a liaison known to all Paris. It dates from the last Salon, for which she did his bust."

"And what about the duchess?"

"Pshaw! she has seen many others. Ah! Madame Jenkins is going to sing."

There was a commotion in the salon, a stronger pressure in the crowd toward the door, and conversation ceased for a moment. Paul de Géry drew a long breath. The words he had just overheard had oppressed his heart. He felt as if he himself were spattered, sullied by the mud unsparingly thrown upon the ideal he had formed for himself of that glorious youth, ripened in the sun of art and endowed with such penetrating charm. He moved away a little, changed his position. He dreaded to hear some other calumny. Madame Jenkins' voice did him good, a voice famous in Parisian salons, a voice that, with all its brilliancy, was in no sense theatrical, but seemed like speech, thrilling with emotion, striking resonant, unfamiliar chords. The singer, a woman of from forty

to forty-five years of age, had magnificent hair of the color of ashes, refined, somewhat weak features, and an expression of great amiability. Still beautiful, she was dressed with the costly taste of a woman who has not abandoned the idea of pleasing. Nor had she abandoned it; she and the doctor — she was then a widow — had been married some ten years, and they seemed still to be enjoying the first months of their joint happiness. While she sang a Russian folk-song, as wild and sweet as the smile of a Slav, Jenkins artlessly manifested his pride without attempt at concealment, his broad face beamed expansively; and she, every time that she leaned forward to take breath, turned in his direction a timid, loving glance which sought him out over the music she held in her hand. And when she had finished, amid a murmur of delight and admiration, it was touching to see her secretly press her husband's hand, as if to reserve for herself a little corner of private happiness amid that great triumph. Young de Géry was taking comfort in the sight of that happy couple, when suddenly a voice murmured by his side — it was not the same voice that had spoken just before:

"You know what people say — that the Jenkinses are not married."

"What nonsense!"

"True, I assure you — it seems that there's a genuine Madame Jenkins somewhere, but not this one who has been exhibited to us. By the way, have you noticed —"

The conversation continued in an undertone. Madame Jenkins approached, bowing and smiling, while the doctor, stopping a salver as it passed, brought her a glass of bordeaux with the zeal of a mother, an impresario, a lover. Slander, slander, ineffaceable stain! Now Jenkins' attentions seemed overdone to the provincial. He thought that there was something affected, studied in them, and at the same time he fancied that he noticed in the thanks she expressed to her husband in a low tone a dread, a submissiveness derogatory to the dignity of a lawful wife, happy and proud in an unassailable position. "Why, society is a hideous thing!" said de Géry to himself in dismay, his hands as cold as ice. The smiles that encompassed him seemed to him like mere grimacing. He was ashamed and disgusted. Then suddenly his soul rose in revolt: "Nonsense! it is n't possible!" And, as if in answer to that exclamation, the voice of slander behind him continued carelessly: "After all, you know, I am not sure. I simply repeat what I hear. Look, there 's Baronne Hemerlingue. He has all Paris here, this Jenkins."

The baroness came forward on the doctor's arm; he had rushed forward to meet her, and, despite his perfect control over his features, he seemed a little perturbed and disconcerted. It had occurred to the excellent Jenkins to take advantage of his party to make peace between his friend Hemerlingue and his friend Jansoulet, his two wealthiest patients, who embarrassed him seriously with their internecine warfare. The Nabob asked nothing

better. He bore his former chum no malice. Their rupture had come about as a result of Hemerlingue's marriage with one of the favorites of the former bey. "A woman's row, in fact," said Jansoulet; and he would be very glad to see the end of it, for any sort of ill-feeling was burdensome to that exuberant nature. But it seemed that the baron was not anxious for a reconciliation; for, notwithstanding the promise he had given Jenkins, his wife appeared alone, to the Irishman's great chagrin.

She was a tall, thin, fragile personage, with eyebrows like a bird's feathers, a youthful, frightened manner, thirty years striving to seem twenty, with a head-dress of grasses and grain drooping over jet black hair thickly strewn with diamonds. With her long lashes falling over white cheeks of the wax-like tint of women who have lived long in the seclusion of a cloister, a little embarrassed in her Parisian garb, she bore less resemblance to a former occupant of a harem than to a nun who had renounced her vows and returned to the world. A touch of devotion, of sanctity in her carriage, a certain ecclesiastical trick of walking with downcast eyes, elbows close to the sides and hands folded, manners which she had acquired in the ultra-religious environment in which she had lived since her conversion and her recent baptism, completed the resemblance. And you can imagine whether worldly curiosity was rampant around that ex-odalisque turned fervent Catholic, as she entered the room, escorted by a sacristan-like

figure with a livid face and spectacles, Maître Le Merquier, Deputy for Lyon, Hemerlingue's man of business, who attended the baroness when the baron was "slightly indisposed," as upon this occasion.

When they entered the second salon, the Nabob walked forward to meet her, expecting to descry in her wake the bloated face of his old comrade, to whom it was agreed that he should offer his hand. The baroness saw him coming and became whiter than ever. A steely gleam shot from under her long lashes. Her nostrils dilated, rose and fell, and as Jansoulet bowed, she quickened her pace, holding her head erect and rigid, letting fall from her thin lips a word in Arabic which no one else could understand, but in which the poor Nabob, for his part, understood the bitter insult; for when he raised his head his swarthy face was of the color of terra-cotta when it comes from the oven. He stood for a moment speechless, his great fists clenched, his lips swollen with anger. Jenkins joined him, and de Géry, who had watched the whole scene from a distance, saw them talking earnestly together with a preoccupied air.

The attempt had miscarried. The reconciliation, so cleverly planned, would not take place. Hemerlingue did not want it. If only the duke did not break his word! It was getting late. La Wauters, who was to sing the "Night" aria from the *Magic Flute*, after the performance at her theatre, had just arrived all muffled up in her lace hood.

And the minister did not come.

But it was a promise and everything was understood. Monpavon was to take him up at the club. From time to time honest Jenkins drew his watch, as he tossed an absent-minded *bravo* to the bouquet of limpid notes that gushed from La Wauters' fairy lips, a bouquet worth three thousand francs, and absolutely wasted, in common with the other expenses of the festivity, if the duke did not come.

Suddenly both wings of the folding-doors were thrown open:

"His Excellency the Duc de Mora!"

A prolonged thrill of excitement greeted him, respectful curiosity drawn up in a double row, instead of the brutal crowding that had impeded the passage of the Nabob.

No one could be more skilled than he in the art of making his appearance in society, of walking gravely across a salon, ascending the tribune with smiling face, imparting solemnity to trifles and treating serious matters lightly; it was a résumé of his attitude in life, a paradoxical distinction. Still handsome, despite his fifty-six years, — a beauty attributable to refined taste and perfect proportion, in which the grace of the dandy was intensified by something of a soldierly character in the figure and the haughty expression of the face, — he appeared to admirable advantage in the black coat, whereon, in Jenkins' honor, he had placed a few of his decorations, which he never displayed except on days of official functions. The sheen of the linen and the white cravat, the unpolished

"'His Excellency, the Duc de Mora!'"

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silver of the decorations, the softness of the thin, grayish hair, gave added pallor to the face, the most bloodless of all the bloodless faces assembled that evening under the Irishman's roof.

He led such a terrible life! Politics, gambling in every form, on the Bourse and at baccarat, and the reputation of a lady-killer which he must maintain at any price. Oh! he was a typical patient of Jenkins, and he certainly owed that visit in princely state to the inventor of the mysterious Pearls, which gave to his eyes that glance of flame, to his whole being that extraordinary pulsing vivacity.

"My dear duke, allow me to present to you —"

Monpavon, solemn of face, with padded calves, attempted to make the introduction so anxiously expected; but His Excellency, in his preoccupation, did not hear and kept on toward the large salon, borne onward by one of those electric currents that break the monotony of social life. As he passed, and while he paid his respects to the fair Madame Jenkins, the women leaned forward with alluring glances, soft laughter, intent upon making a favorable impression. But he saw only one, Felicia, who stood in the centre of a group of men, holding forth as if in her own studio, and tranquilly sipping a sherbet as she watched the duke's approach. She welcomed him with perfect naturalness. Those who stood by discreetly withdrew. But, in spite of what de Géry had overheard concerning their alleged relations, there seemed to be only a good-fellowship entirely of the mind between them, a playful familiarity.

"I called at your house, Mademoiselle, on my way to the Bois."

"So I understood. You even went into the studio."

"And I saw the famous group — my group."

"Well?"

"It is very fine. The greyhound runs like a mad dog. The fox is admirably done. But I did n't quite understand. You told me that it was the story of us two."

"And so it is! Look carefully. It's a fable that I read in — You don't read Rabelais, Monsieur le Duc?"

"Faith, no. He is too vulgar."

"Well, I have learned to read him. Very ill-bred, you know! Oh! very. My fable, then, is taken from Rabelais. This is it: Bacchus has made a wonderful fox that cannot possibly be overtaken. Vulcan, for his part, has given a dog of his making the power to overtake any animal that he pursues. 'Now,' as my author says, 'suppose that they meet.' You see what a wild and interminable race will result. It seems to me, my dear duke, that destiny has brought us face to face in like manner, endowed with contrary qualities, you, who have received from the gods the gift of reaching all hearts, and I, whose heart will never be taken."

She said this, looking him fairly in the face, almost laughing, but slim and erect in her white tunic, which seemed to protect her person against the liberties of his wit. He, the conqueror, the

irresistible, had never met one of that audacious, self-willed race. So he enveloped her in all the magnetic currents of his seductive charm, while around them the murmur of the fête, the flute-like laughter, the rustling of satins and strings of pearls played an accompaniment to that duet of worldly passion and juvenile irony.

In a moment he rejoined:

"But how did the gods extricate themselves from that scrape?"

"By changing the two coursers to stone."

"By heaven," said he, "that is a result which I refuse to accept. I defy the gods to turn my heart to stone."

A flame darted from his eyes, extinguished instantly at the thought that people were looking at them.

In truth many people were looking at them, but no one with such deep interest as Jenkins, who prowled around them, impatient and chafing, as if he were angry with Felicia for monopolizing the important guest of the evening. The girl laughingly remarked upon the fact to the duke:

"They will say that I am appropriating you."

She pointed to Monpavon standing expectantly by the Nabob, who, from afar, bestowed upon His Excellency the submissive, imploring gaze of a great faithful dog. Thereupon the Minister of State remembered what had brought him there. He bowed to Felicia and returned to Monpavon, who was able at last to present "his honorable friend, Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet." His Ex-

cellency bowed; the parvenu humbled himself lower than the earth; then they conversed for a moment.

It was an interesting group to watch. Jansoulet, tall and strongly built, with his vulgar manners, his tanned skin, his broad back, bent as if it had become rounded for good and all in the salaams of Oriental sycophancy, his short fat hands bursting through his yellow gloves, his abundant pantomime, his Southern exuberance causing him to cut off his words as if with a machine. The other, of noble birth, a thorough man of the world, elegance itself, graceful in the least of his gestures, which were very rare by the way, negligently letting fall incomplete sentences, lighting up his grave face with a half smile, concealing beneath the most perfect courtesy his boundless contempt for men and women; and that contempt was the main element of his strength. In an American parlor the antithesis would have been less offensive. The Nabob's millions would have established equilibrium and even turned the scale in his favor. But Paris does not as yet place money above all the other powers, and, to be convinced of that fact, one had only to see that stout merchant frisking about with an amiable smile before the great nobleman, and spreading beneath his feet, like the courtier's ermine cloak, his dense parvenu's pride.

From the corner in which he had taken refuge, de Géry was watching the scene with interest, knowing what importance his friend attached to this presentation, when chance, which had so

cruelly given the lie all the evening to his artless neophyte's ideas, brought to his ears this brief dialogue, in that sea of private conversations in which every one hears just the words that are of interest to him:

"The least that Monpavon can do is to introduce him to some decent people. He has introduced him to so many bad ones. You know that he 's just tossed Paganetti and his whole crew into his arms."

"The poor devil! Why, they 'll devour him."

"Pshaw! it 's only fair to make him disgorge a little. He stole so much down there among the Turks."

"Really, do you think so?"

"Do I think so! I have some very precise information on that subject from Baron Hemerlingue, the banker who negotiated the last Tunisian loan. He knows some fine stories about this Nabob. Just fancy —"

And the stream of calumny began to flow. For fifteen years Jansoulet had plundered the late bey shamefully. They mentioned the names of contractors and cited divers swindles characterized by admirable coolness and effrontery; for instance, the story of a musical frigate — yes, it really played tunes — intended as a dining-room ornament, which he bought for two hundred thousand francs and sold again for ten millions; a throne sold to the bey for three millions, whereas the bill could be seen on the books of a house furnisher of Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and amounted to less than a hun-

dred thousand francs; and the most comical part of it was that the bey's fancy changed and the royal seat, having fallen into disgrace before it had even been unpacked, was still in its packing-case at the custom-house in Tripoli.

Furthermore, aside from these outrageous commissions on the sale of the most trivial playthings, there were other far more serious accusations, but equally authentic, as they all came from the same source. In addition to the seraglio there was a harem of European women, admirably equipped for His Highness by the Nabob, who should be a connoisseur in such matters, as he had been engaged in the most extraordinary occupations in Paris before his departure for the Orient: ticket speculator, manager of a public ball at the barrier, and of a house of much lower reputation. And the whispering terminated in a stifled laugh, — the coarse laugh of two men in private conversation.

The young provincial's first impulse, on hearing those infamous slanders, was to turn and cry out:

"You lie!"

A few hours earlier he would have done it without hesitation, but since he had been there he had learned to be suspicious, sceptical. He restrained himself therefore and listened to the end, standing in the same spot, having in his heart an unconfessed desire to know more of the man in whose service he was. As for the Nabob, the perfectly unconscious subject of that ghastly chronicle, he was quietly playing a game of écarté with the Duc de Mora in a small salon to which the blue

hangings and two shaded lamps imparted a meditative air.

O wonderful magic of the galleon! The son of the dealer in old iron alone at a card-table with the first personage of the Empire! Jansoulet could hardly believe the Venetian mirror in which were reflected his resplendent, beaming face and that august cranium, divided by a long bald streak. So it was that, in order to show his appreciation of that great honor, he strove to lose as many thousand-franc notes as he decently could, feeling that he was the winner none the less, and proud as Lucifer to see his money pass into those aristocratic hands, whose every movement he studied while they were cutting, dealing, or holding the cards.

A circle formed around them, but at a respectful distance, the ten paces required for saluting a prince; that was the audience of the triumph at which the Nabob was present as if in a dream, intoxicated by the fairy-like strains slightly muffled in the distance, the songs that reached his ears in detached phrases, as if they passed over a resonant sheet of water, the perfume of the flowers that bloom so strangely toward the close of Parisian balls, when the late hour, confusing all notions of time, and the weariness of the sleepless night communicate to brains which have become more buoyant in a more nervous atmosphere a sort of youthful giddiness. The robust nature of Jansoulet, that civilized savage, was more susceptible than another to these strange refinements; and he had

to exert all his strength to refrain from inaugurating with a joyful hurrah an unseasonable outpouring of words and gestures, from giving way to the impulse of physical buoyancy which stirred his whole being; like the great mountain dogs which are thrown into convulsions of epileptic frenzy by inhaling a single drop of a certain essence.

"It is a fine night and the sidewalks are dry. If you like, my dear boy, we will send away the carriage and go home on foot," said Jansoulet to his companion as they left Jenkins' house.

De Géry eagerly assented. He needed to walk, to shake off in the sharp air the infamies and lies of that society comedy which left his heart cold and oppressed, while all his life-blood had taken refuge in his temples, of whose swollen veins he could hear the beating. He walked unsteadily, like a poor creature who has been operated on for cataract and in the first terror of recovered vision dares not put one foot before the other. But with what a brutal hand the operation had been performed! And so that great artist with the glorious name, that pure, wild beauty, the mere sight of whom had agitated him like a supernatural apparition, was simply a courtesan. Madame Jenkins, that imposing creature, whose manner was at once so proud and so sweet, was not really Madame Jenkins. That illustrious scientist, so frank of feature and so hospitable, had the impudence to live publicly in shameless

concubinage. And Paris suspected it, yet that did not prevent Paris from attending their parties. Last of all, this Jansoulet, so kind-hearted and generous, for whom he felt such a burden of gratitude in his heart, had to his knowledge fallen into the hands of a crew of bandits, being himself a bandit, and quite worthy of the scheme devised to make him disgorge his millions.

Was it possible; must he believe it?

A sidelong glance at the Nabob, whose huge frame filled the whole sidewalk, suddenly revealed to him something low and common that he had not before noticed in that gait to which the weight of the money in his pockets gave a decided lurch. Yes, he was the typical adventurer from the South, moulded of the slime that covers the quays of Marseille, trodden hard by all the vagabonds who wander from seaport to seaport. Kind-hearted, generous, forsooth! as prostitutes are, and thieves. And the gold that flowed into that luxurious and vicious receptacle, spattering everything, even the walls, seemed to him now to bring with it all the dregs, all the filth of its impure and slimy source. That being so, there was but one thing for him, de Géry, to do, and that was to go, to leave as soon as possible the place where he ran the risk of compromising his name, all that there was of his patrimony. Of course. But there were the two little brothers down yonder in the provinces, — who would pay for their schooling? Who would keep up the modest home miraculously restored by the handsome salary of the oldest son, the head of

the family? The words "head of the family" cast him at once into one of those inward combats in which self-interest and conscience are the contending parties — the one strong, brutal, attacking fiercely with straight blows, the other retreating, breaking the measure by suddenly withdrawing its weapon — while honest Jansoulet, the unconscious cause of the conflict, strode along beside his young friend, inhaling the fresh air delightedly with the lighted end of his cigar.

He had never been so happy that he was alive. And that evening at Jenkins', his own début in society as well as Paul's, had left upon him an impression of arches erected as if for a triumph, of a curious crowd, of flowers thrown in his path. So true is it that things exist only through the eyes that see them. What a success! The duke, just as they parted, urging him to come and see his gallery; which meant that the doors of the hôtel de Mora would be open to him within a week. Felicia Ruys consenting to make a bust of him, so that at the next exposition the junk-dealer's son would have his portrait in marble by the same great artist whose name was appended to that of the Minister of State. Was not this the gratification of all his childish vanities?

Revolving thus their thoughts, cheerful or sinister, they walked on side by side, preoccupied, distraught, so that Place Vendôme, silent and flooded by a cold, blue light, rang beneath their feet before they had spoken a word.

"Already!" said the Nabob. "I would have

liked to walk a little farther. What do you say?" And as they walked around the square two or three times, he emitted in puffs the exuberant joy with which he was full to overflowing.

"How fine it is! What pleasure to breathe! God's thunder! I would n't give up my evening for a hundred thousand francs. What a fine fellow that Jenkins is! Do you like Felicia Ruys' type of beauty? For my part, I dote on it. And the duke, what a perfect great nobleman! so simple, so amiable. That is fashionable Paris, eh, my son?"

"It 's too complicated for me — it frightens me," said Paul de Géry in a low voice.

"Yes, yes, I understand," rejoined the other, with adorable conceit. "You are n't used to it yet, but one soon gets into it, you know! See how perfectly at my ease I am after only a month."

"That 's because you had been in Paris before. You used to live here."

"I? Never in my life. Who told you that?"

"Why, I thought so," replied the young man, and added, as a multitude of thoughts came crowding into his mind:

"What have you ever done to this Baron Hemerlingue? There seems to be a deadly hatred between you."

The Nabob was taken aback for a moment. That name Hemerlingue, suddenly obtruded upon his joy, reminded him of the only unpleasant episode of the evening.

"To him, as to everybody else," he said in a sad

voice, " I never did anything but good. We began life together in a miserable way. We grew and prospered side by side. When he attempted to fly with his own wings I always assisted him, supported him as best I could. It was through me that he had the contract for supplying the fleet and army for ten years; almost the whole of his fortune comes from that. And then one fine morning that idiot of a cold-blooded Bearnese must go and fall in love with an odalisque whom the bey's mother had turned out of the harem! She was a handsome, ambitious hussy; she made him marry her, and naturally, after that excellent marriage, Hemerlingue had to leave Tunis. They had made him believe that I egged the bey on to forbid him the country. That is not true. On the contrary, I persuaded His Highness to allow the younger Hemerlingue — his first wife's child — to remain at Tunis to look after their interests there, while the father came to Paris to establish his banking-house. But I was well repaid for my kindness. When my poor Ahmed died and the *mouchir*, his brother, ascended the throne, the Hemerlingues, being restored to favor, never ceased to try to injure me in the eyes of the new master. The bey was always pleasant with me, but my influence was impaired. Ah well! in spite of all that, in spite of all the tricks Hemerlingue has played on me and is playing on me still, I was ready to offer him my hand to-night. Not only did the villain refuse it, but he sent his wife to insult me, — an uncivilized, vicious beast, who can

never forgive me for refusing to receive her at Tunis. Do you know what she called me there to-night when she passed me? 'Robber and son of a dog.' The harlot had the face to call me that. As if I did n't know my Hemerlingue, who 's as cowardly as he is fat. But, after all, let them say what they choose. I snap my fingers at 'em. What can they do against me? Destroy my credit with the bey? That makes no difference to me. I have no more business in Tunis, and I shall get away from there altogether as soon as possible. There 's only one city, one country in the world, and that is Paris, hospitable, open-hearted Paris, with no false modesty, where any intelligent man finds room to do great things. And, you see, de Géry, I propose to do great things. I 've had enough of business life. I have worked twenty years for money; now I am greedy for respect, glory, renown. I mean to be a personage of some consequence in the history of my country, and that will be an easy matter for me. With my great fortune, my knowledge of men and of affairs, with what I feel here in my head, I can aspire to anything and reach any eminence. So take my advice, my dear boy, don't leave me," — one would have said he was answering his young companion's secret thought, — "stick loyally to my ship. The spars are stanch and the hold is full of coal. I swear to you that we will sail far and fast, damme!"

The artless Southerner thus discharged his plans into the darkness with an abundance of expressive

gestures, and from time to time, as they paced the vast, deserted square, majestically surrounded by its tightly-closed silent palaces, he looked up toward the bronze man on the column, as if calling to witness that great upstart, whose presence in the heart of Paris justifies the most extravagant ambitions and renders all chimeras probable.

There is in youth a warmth of heart, a craving for enthusiasm which are aroused by the slightest breath. As the Nabob spoke, de Géry felt his suspicions vanishing and all his sympathy reviving with an infusion of pity. No, surely that man was no vile knave, but a poor deluded mortal whose fortune had gone to his head, like a wine too powerful for a stomach that has long slaked its thirst with water. Alone in the midst of Paris, surrounded by enemies and sharpers, Jansoulet reminded him of a pedestrian laden with gold passing through a wood haunted by thieves, in the dark and unarmed. And he thought that it would be well for the protégé to watch over the patron without seeming to do so, to be the clear-sighted Telemachus of that blind Mentor, to point out the pitfalls to him, to defend him against the brigands, in short to assist him to fight in that swarm of nocturnal ambuscades which he felt to be lurking savagely about the Nabob and his millions.

V.

THE JOYEUSE FAMILY.

EVERY morning in the year, at precisely eight o'clock, a new and almost uninhabited house in an out-of-the-way quarter of Paris was filled with shouts and cries and happy laughter that rang clear as crystal in the desert of the hall.

"Father, don't forget my music."

"Father, my embroidery cotton."

"Father, bring us some rolls."

And the father's voice calling from below:

"Yaia, throw down my bag."

"Well, upon my word! he's forgotten his bag."

Thereupon there was joyous haste from top to bottom of the house, a running to and fro of all those pretty faces, heavy-eyed with sleep, of all those touzled locks which they put in order as they ran, up to the very moment when a half-dozen of young girls, leaning over the rail, bade an echoing farewell to a little old gentleman neatly dressed and well brushed, whose florid face and slight figure disappeared at last in the convolutions of the staircase. M. Joyeuse had gone to

his office. Thereupon the whole flock of fugitives from the bird-cage ran quickly up to the fourth floor, and, after locking the door, gathered at an open window to catch another glimpse of the father. The little man turned, kisses were exchanged at a distance, then the windows were closed; the new, deserted house became quiet once more except for the signs dancing their wild saraband in the wind on the unfinished street, as if they too were stirred to gayety by all that manœuvring. A moment later the photographer on the fifth floor came down to hang his show-case at the door, always the same, with the old gentleman in the white cravat surrounded by his daughters in varied groups; then he went upstairs again in his turn, and the perfect calm succeeding that little matutinal tumult suggested the thought that "the father" and his young ladies had returned to the show-case, where they would remain motionless and smiling, until evening.

From Rue Saint-Ferdinand to Messieurs Hemerlingue and Son's, his employers, M. Joyeuse had a walk of three-quarters of an hour. He held his head erect and stiff, as if he were afraid of disarranging the lovely bow of his cravat, tied by his daughters, or his hat, put on by them; and when the oldest, always anxious and prudent, turned up the collar of his overcoat just as he was going out, to protect him against the vicious gust of wind at the street corner, M. Joyeuse, even when the temperature was that of a hothouse, never turned it down until he reached the office, like the lover

fresh from his mistress's embrace, who dares not stir for fear of losing the intoxicating perfume.

The excellent man, a widower for some years, lived for his children alone, thought only of them, went out into the world surrounded by those little blond heads, which fluttered confusedly around him as in a painting of the Assumption. All his desires, all his plans related to "the young ladies" and constantly returned to them, sometimes after long detours; for M. Joyeuse — doubtless because of his very short neck and his short figure, in which his bubbling blood had but a short circuit to make — possessed an astonishingly fertile imagination. Ideas formed in his mind as rapidly as threshed straw collects around the hopper. At the office the figures kept his mind fixed by their unromantic rigidity; but once outside, it took its revenge for that inexorable profession. The exercise of walking and familiarity with a route of which he knew by heart the most trivial details, gave entire liberty to his imaginative faculties, and he invented extraordinary adventures, ample material for twenty newspaper novels.

Suppose, for example, that M. Joyeuse were walking through Faubourg Saint-Honoré, on the right hand sidewalk — he always chose that side — and espied a heavy laundress's cart going along at a smart trot, driven by a countrywoman whose child, perched on a bundle of linen, was leaning over the side.

"The child!" the good man would exclaim in dismay, "look out for the child!"

His voice would be lost in the clatter of the wheels and his warning in the secret design of Providence. The cart would pass on. He would look after it for a moment, then go his way; but the drama begun in his mind would go on unfolding itself there with numberless sudden changes. The child had fallen. The wheels were just about to pass over him. M. Joyeuse would dart forward, save the little creature on the very brink of death, but the shaft would strike himself full in the breast, and he would fall, bathed in his blood. Thereupon he would see himself carried to the druggist's amid the crowd that had collected. They would place him on a litter and carry him home, then suddenly he would hear the heart-rending cry of his daughters, his beloved daughters, upon seeing him in that condition. And that cry would go so straight to his heart, he would hear it so distinctly, so vividly: "Papa, dear papa!" that he would repeat it himself in the street, to the great surprise of the passers-by, in a hoarse voice which would wake him from his manufactured nightmare.

Would you like another instance of the vagaries of that prodigious imagination? It rains, it hails; beastly weather. M. Joyeuse has taken the omnibus to go to his office. As he takes his seat opposite a species of giant, with brutish face and formidable biceps, M. Joyeuse, an insignificant little creature, with his bag on his knees, draws in his legs to make room for the enormous pillars that support his neighbor's monumental trunk.

In the jolting of the vehicle and the pattering of the rain on the windows, M. Joyeuse begins to dream. And suddenly the colossus opposite, who has a good-natured face enough, is amazed to see the little man change color and glare at him with fierce, murderous eyes, gnashing his teeth. Yes, murderous eyes in truth, for at that moment M. Joyeuse is dreaming a terrible dream. One of his daughters is sitting there, opposite him, beside that annoying brute, and the villain is putting his arm around her waist under her cloak.

"Take your hand away, monsieur," M. Joyeuse has already said twice. The other simply laughs contemptuously. Now he attempts to embrace Élise.

"Ah! villain!"

Lacking strength to defend his daughter, M. Joyeuse, foaming with rage, feels in his pocket for his knife, stabs the insolent knave in the breast, and goes away with head erect, strong in the consciousness of his rights as an outraged father, to make his statement at the nearest police-station.

"I have just killed a man in an omnibus!"

The poor fellow wakes at the sound of his own voice actually uttering those sinister words, but not at the police-station; he realizes from the horrified faces of the passengers that he must have spoken aloud, and speedily avails himself of the conductor's call: "Saint-Philippe — Panthéon — Bastille," to alight, in dire confusion and amid general stupefaction.

That imagination, always on the alert, gave to

M. Joyeuse's face a strangely feverish, haggard expression, in striking contrast to the faultlessly correct dress and bearing of the petty clerk. He lived through so many passionate existences in a single day. Such waking dreamers as he, in whom a too restricted destiny holds in check unemployed forces, heroic faculties, are more numerous than is generally supposed. Dreaming is the safety valve through which it all escapes, with a terrible spluttering, an intensely hot vapor and floating images which instantly disappear. Some come forth from these visions radiant, others downcast and abashed, finding themselves once more on the commonplace level of everyday life. M. Joyeuse was of the former class, constantly soaring aloft to heights from which one cannot descend without being a little shaken by the rapidity of the journey.

Now, one morning when our *Imaginaire* had left his house at the usual hour and under the usual circumstances, he started upon one of his little private romances as he turned out of Rue Saint-Ferdinand. The end of the year was close at hand, and perhaps it was the sight of a board shanty under construction in the neighboring woodyard that made him think of "New Year's gifts." And thereupon the word *bonus* planted itself in his mind, as the first landmark in an exciting story. In the month of December all Hemerlingue's clerks received double pay, and in small households, you know, a thousand ambitious or generous projects are based upon such wind-

falls, — presents to be given, a piece of furniture to be replaced, a small sum tucked away in a drawer for unforeseen emergencies.

The fact is that M. Joyeuse was not rich. His wife, a Mademoiselle de Saint-Amand, being tormented with aspirations for worldly grandeur, had established the little household on a ruinous footing, and in the three years since her death, although *Grandmamma* had managed affairs so prudently, they had not been able as yet to save anything, the burden of the past was so heavy. Suddenly the excellent man fancied that the honorarium would be larger than usual that year on account of the increased work necessitated by the Tunisian loan. That loan was a very handsome thing for his employers, too handsome indeed, for M. Joyeuse had taken the liberty to say at the office that on that occasion "Hemerlingue and Son had shaved the Turk a little too close."

"Yes, the bonus will certainly be doubled," thought the visionary as he walked along; and already he saw himself, a month hence, ascending the staircase leading to Hemerlingue's private office, with his fellow-clerks, for their New Year's call. The banker announced the good news; then he detained M. Joyeuse for a private interview. And lo! that employer, usually so cold, and encased in his yellow fat as in a bale of raw silk, became affectionate, fatherly, communicative. He wished to know how many daughters Joyeuse had.

"I have three — that is to say, four, Monsieur

le Baron. I always get confused about them. The oldest one is such a little woman."

How old were they?

"Aline is twenty, Monsieur le Baron. She's the oldest. Then we have Élise who is eighteen and preparing for her examination, Henriette who is fourteen, and Zaza or Yaia who is only twelve."

The pet name Yaia amused Monsieur le Baron immensely; he also inquired as to the resources of the family.

"My salary, Monsieur le Baron, nothing but that. I had a little money laid by, but my poor wife's sickness and the girls' education — "

"What you earn is not enough, my dear Joyeuse. I raise you to a thousand francs a month."

"Oh! Monsieur le Baron, that is too much!"

But, although he had uttered this last phrase aloud, in the face of a policeman who watched with a suspicious eye the little man who gesticulated and shook his head so earnestly, the poor visionary did not awake. He joyously imagined himself returning home, telling the news to his daughters, and taking them to the theatre in the evening to celebrate that happy day. God! how pretty the Joyeuse girls were, sitting in the front of their box! what a nosegay of rosy cheeks! And then, on the next day, lo and behold the two oldest are sought in marriage by — Impossible to say by whom, for M. Joyeuse suddenly found himself under the porch of the Hemerlingue establishment, in front of a swing-door surmounted by the words, "Counting Room" in gold letters.

"I shall always be the same," he said to himself with a little laugh, wiping his forehead, on which the perspiration stood in beads.

Put in good humor by his fancy, by the blazing fires in the long line of offices, with inlaid floors and wire gratings, keeping the secrets confided to them in the subdued light of the ground floor, where one could count gold pieces without being dazzled by them, M. Joyeuse bade the other clerks a cheery good-morning, and donned his working-coat and black velvet cap. Suddenly there was a whistle from above; and the cashier, putting his ear to the tube, heard the coarse, gelatinous voice of Hemerlingue, the only, the genuine Hemerlingue — the other, the son, was always absent — asking for M. Joyeuse. What! was he still dreaming? He was greatly excited as he took the little inner stairway, which he had ascended so jauntily just before, and found himself in the banker's office, a narrow room with a very high ceiling, and with no other furniture than green curtains and enormous leather arm-chairs, proportioned to the formidable bulk of the head of the house. He was sitting there at his desk, which his paunch prevented him from approaching, corpulent, puffing, and so yellow that his round face with its hooked nose, the face of a fat, diseased owl, shone like a beacon light in that solemn, gloomy office. A coarse, Moorish merchant mouldering in the dampness of his little courtyard. His eyes gleamed an instant beneath his heavy slow-moving eyelids when the clerk entered; he motioned to

him to approach, and slowly, coldly, with frequent breaks in his breathless sentences, instead of: "M. Joyeuse, how many daughters have you?" he said this:

"Joyeuse, you have assumed to criticize in our offices our recent operations on the market in Tunis. No use to deny it. What you said has been repeated to me word for word. And as I can't allow such things from one of my clerks, I notify you that with the end of this month you will cease to be in my employ."

The blood rushed to the clerk's face, receded, returned, causing each time a confused buzzing in his ears, a tumult of thoughts and images in his brain.

His daughters!

What would become of them?

Places are so scarce at that time of year!

Want stared him in the face, and also the vision of a poor devil falling at Hemerlingue's feet, imploring him, threatening him, leaping at his throat in an outburst of desperate frenzy. All this agitation passed across his face like a gust of wind which wrinkles the surface of a lake, hollowing out shifting caverns of all shapes therein; but he stood mute on the same spot, and at a hint from his employer that he might withdraw, went unsteadily down to resume his task in the counting-room.

That evening, on returning to Rue Saint-Ferdinand, M. Joyeuse said nothing to his daughters. He dared not. The thought of casting a shadow upon that radiant gayety, which was the whole life

of the house, of dimming with great tears those sparkling eyes, seemed to him unendurable. Moreover he was timid and weak, one of those who always say: "Let us wait till to-morrow." So he waited before speaking, in the first place until the month of November should be at an end, comforting himself with the vague hope that Hemerlingue might change his mind, as if he did not know that unyielding will, like the flabby, tenacious grasp of a mollusk clinging to its gold ingot. Secondly, when his accounts were settled and another clerk had taken his place at the tall desk at which he had stood so long, he hoped speedily to find something else and to repair the disaster before he was obliged to avow it.

Every morning he pretended to start for the office, allowed himself to be equipped and escorted to the door as usual, his great leather bag all ready for the numerous parcels he was to bring home at night. Although he purposely forgot some of them because of the approach of the perplexing close of the month, he no longer lacked time in which to do his daughters' errands. He had his day to himself, an interminable day, which he passed in running about Paris in search of a place. They gave him addresses and excellent recommendations. But in that month of December, when the air is so cold and the days are so short, a month overburdened with expenses and anxieties, clerks suffer in patience and employers too. Every one tries to end the year in tranquillity, postponing to the month of January, when time takes

a great leap onward toward another station, all changes, ameliorations, attempts to lead a new life.

Wherever M. Joyeuse called, he saw faces suddenly turn cold as soon as he explained the purpose of his visit. "What! you are no longer with Hemerlingue and Son? How does that happen?" He would explain the condition of affairs as best he could, attributing it to a caprice of his employer, that violent-tempered Hemerlingue whom all Paris knew; but he was conscious of a cold, suspicious accent in the uniform reply: "Come and see us after the holidays." And, timid as he was at best, he reached a point at which he hardly dared apply anywhere, but would walk back and forth twenty times in front of the same door, nor would he ever have crossed the threshold but for the thought of his daughters. That thought alone would grasp his shoulder, put heart into his legs and send him to opposite ends of Paris in the same day, to exceedingly vague addresses given him by comrades, to a great bone-black factory at Aubervilliers, for instance, where they made him call three days in succession, and all for nothing.

Oh! the long walks in the rain and frost, the closed doors, the employer who has gone out or has visitors, the promises given and suddenly retracted, the disappointed hopes, the enervating effect of long suspense, the humiliation in store for every man who asks for work, as if it were a shameful thing to be without it. M. Joyeuse experienced all those heartsickening details, and he learned too how the will becomes weary and

discouraged in the face of persistent ill-luck. And you can imagine whether the bitter martyrdom of "the man in search of a place" was intensified by the fantasies of his imagination, by the chimeras which rose before him from the pavements of Paris, while he pursued his quest in every direction.

For a whole month he was like one of those pitiful marionettes who soliloquize and gesticulate on the sidewalks, and from whom the slightest jostling on the part of the crowd extorts a somnambulistic ejaculation: "I said as much," or "Don't you doubt it, monsieur." You pass on, you almost laugh, but you are moved to pity at the unconsciousness of those poor devils, possessed by a fixed idea, blind men led by dreams, drawn on by an invisible leash. The terrible feature of it all was this, that when M. Joyeuse returned home, after those long, cruel days of inaction and fatigue, he must enact the comedy of the man returning from work, must describe the events of the day, tell what he had heard, the gossip of the office, with which he was always accustomed to entertain the young ladies.

In humble households there is always one name that comes to the lips more frequently than others, a name that is invoked on days of disaster, that plays a part in every wish, in every hope, even in the play of the children, who are permeated with the idea of its importance, a name that fills the rôle of a sub-providence in the family, or rather of a supernatural household god. It is the name

of the employer, the manager of the factory, the landlord, the minister, the man, in short, who holds in his powerful hand the welfare, the very existence of the family. In the Joyeuse household it was Hemerlingue, always Hemerlingue; ten, twenty times a day the name was mentioned in the conversation of the girls, who associated it with all their plans, with the most trivial details of their girlish ambitions: "If Hemerlingue would consent. It all depends on Hemerlingue." And nothing could be more delightful than the familiar way in which those children spoke of the wealthy boor whom they had never seen.

They asked questions about him. Had their father spoken to him? Was he in good humor? To think that all of us, however humble we may be, however cruelly enslaved by destiny, have always below us some poor creature more humble, more enslaved than ourselves, in whose eyes we are great, in whose eyes we are gods, and, as gods, indifferent, scornful or cruel.

We can fancy M. Joyeuse's torture when he was compelled to invent incidents, to manufacture anecdotes concerning the villain who had dismissed him so heartlessly after ten years of faithful service. However, he played his little comedy in such way as to deceive them all completely. They had noticed only one thing, and that was that their father, on returning home at night, always had a hearty appetite for the evening meal. I should say as much! Since he had lost his place, the poor man had ceased to eat any luncheon.

The days passed. M. Joyeuse found nothing. Yes, he was offered a clerkship at the *Caisse Territoriale*, which he declined, being too well acquainted with the banking operations, with all the nooks and corners of financial Bohemia in general and the *Caisse Territoriale* in particular, to step foot in that den.

"But," said Passajon — for it was Passajon, who, happening to meet the good man and finding that he was unemployed, had spoken to him of taking service with Paganetti — "but I tell you again that it's all right. We have plenty of money. We pay our debts. I have been paid; just see what a dandy I am."

In truth, the old clerk had a new livery, and his paunch protruded majestically beneath his tunic with silver buttons. For all that, M. Joyeuse had withstood the temptation, even after Passajon, opening wide his bulging eyes, had whispered with emphasis in his ear these words big with promise:

"The Nabob is in it."

Even after that, M. Joyeuse had had the courage to say no. Was it not better to die of hunger than to enter the service of an unsubstantial house whose books he might some day be called upon to examine as an expert before a court of justice?

So he continued to wander about; but he was discouraged and had abandoned his search for employment. As it was necessary for him to remain away from home, he loitered in front of the shop-windows on the quays, leaned for hours on the parapets, watching the river and the boats dis-

charging their cargoes. He became one of those idlers whom we see in the front rank of all street crowds, taking refuge from a shower under porches, drawing near the stoves on which the asphalters boil their tar in the open air, to warm themselves, and sinking on benches along the boulevard when their feet can no longer carry them.

What an excellent way of lengthening one's days, to do nothing!

On certain days, however, when M. Joyeuse was too tired or the weather too inclement, he waited at the end of the street until the young ladies had closed their window, then went back to the house, hugging the walls, hurried upstairs, holding his breath as he passed his own door, and took refuge with the photographer, André Maranne, who, being aware of his catastrophe, offered him the compassionate welcome which poor devils extend to one another. Customers are rare so near the barriers. He would sit for many hours in the studio, talking in an undertone, reading by his friend's side, listening to the rain on the window-panes or the wind whistling as in mid-ocean, rattling the old doors and window-frames in the graveyard of demolished buildings below. On the next floor he heard familiar sounds, full of charm for him, snatches of song accompanying the work of willing hands, a chorus of laughter, the piano lesson given by *Grand-mamma*, the tic-tac of the metronome, a delicious domestic hurly-burly that warmed his heart. He lived with his darlings, who certainly had no idea that they had him so near at hand.

Once, while Maranne was out, M. Joyeuse, acting as a faithful custodian of the studio and its brand-new equipment, heard two little taps on the ceiling of the fourth floor, two separate, very distinct taps, then a cautious rumbling like the scampering of a mouse. The intimacy between the photographer and his neighbors justified this prisoner-like method of communication, but what did that mean? How should he answer what seemed like a call? At all hazards he repeated the two taps, the soft drumming sound, and the interview stopped there. When André Maranne returned, he explained it. It was very simple: sometimes, during the day, the young ladies, who never saw their neighbor except in the evening, took that means of inquiring for his health and whether business was improving. The signal he had heard signified: "Is business good to-day?" and M. Joyeuse had instinctively but unwittingly replied: "Not bad for the season." Although young Maranne blushed hotly as he said it, M. Joyeuse believed him. But the idea of frequent communication between the two households made him fear lest his secret should be divulged, and thereafter he abstained from what he called his "artistic days." However, the time was drawing near when he could no longer conceal his plight, for the end of the month was at hand, complicated by the end of the year.

Paris was already assuming the usual festal aspect of the last weeks of December. That is about all that is left in the way of national or popular merry-making. The revels of the carnival died with

Gavarni, the religious festivals, the music of which we scarcely hear above the din of the streets, seclude themselves behind the heavy church doors, the Fifteenth of August has never been aught but the Saint-Charlemagne of the barracks; but Paris has retained its respect for the first day of the year.

Early in December a violent epidemic of childishness is apparent in the streets. Wagons pass, laden with gilded drums, wooden horses, playthings by the score. In the manufacturing districts, from top to bottom of the five-story buildings, former palaces of the Marais, where the shops have such lofty ceilings and stately double doors, people work all night, handling gauze, flowers and straw, fastening labels on satin-covered boxes, sorting out, marking and packing; the innumerable details of the toy trade, that great industry upon which Paris places the sign-manual of its refined taste. There is a smell of green wood, of fresh paint, of glistening varnish, and in the dust of the garrets, on the rickety stairways where the common people deposit all the mud through which they have tramped, chips of rosewood are strewn about, clippings of satin and velvet, bits of tinsel, all the débris of the treasures employed to dazzle childish eyes. Then the shop-windows array themselves. Behind the transparent glass the gilt binding of gift-books ascends like a gleaming wave under the gas-lights, rich stuffs of kaleidoscopic, tempting hues display their heavy, graceful folds, while the shop-girls, with their hair piled high upon

their heads and ribbons around their necks, puff their wares with the little finger in the air, or fill silk bags, into which the bonbons fall like a shower of pearls.

But face to face with this bourgeois industry, firmly established and intrenched behind its gorgeous shop fronts, is the ephemeral industry carried on in the stalls built of plain boards, open to the wind from the street, standing in a double row which gives the boulevard the aspect of a foreign market place. There are to be found the real interest, the poetry of New Year's gifts. Luxurious in the Madeleine quarter, less ostentatious toward Boulevard Saint-Denis, cheaper and more tawdry as you approach the Bastille, these little booths change their character to suit their customers, estimate their chances of success according to the condition of the purses of the passers-by. Between them stand tables covered with trifles, miracles of the petty Parisian trades, made of nothing, fragile and insignificant, but sometimes whirled away by fashion in one of its fierce gusts, because of their very lightness. And lastly, along the sidewalks, lost in the line of vehicles which brush against them as they stroll along, the orange-women put the final touch to this ambulatory commerce, heaping up the sun-colored fruit under their red lanterns, and crying: "La Valence!" in the fog, the uproar, the excessive haste with which Paris rushes to meet the close of the year.

Ordinarily M. Joyeuse made a part of the happy

crowd that throngs the streets with a jingling of money in the pockets and packages in every hand. He would run about with *Grandmamma* in quest of presents for the young ladies, stopping in front of the booths of the small shopkeepers whom the slightest indication of a customer excites beyond measure, for they are unfamiliar with the art of selling and have based upon that brief season visions of extraordinary profits. And there would be consultations and meditations, a never-ending perplexity as to the final selection in that busy little brain, always in advance of the present and of the occupation of the moment.

But that year, alas! there was nothing of the sort. He wandered sadly through the joyous city, sadder and more discouraged by reason of all the activity around him, jostled and bumped like all those who impede the circulation of the industrious, his heart beating with constant dread, for *Grandmamma*, for several days past, had been making significant, prophetic remarks at table on the subject of New Year's gifts. For that reason he avoided being left alone with her and had forbidden her coming to meet him at the office. But, struggle as he would, the time was drawing near, he felt it in his bones, when further mystery would be impossible and his secret would be divulged. Was this *Grandmamma* of whom M. Joyeuse stood in such fear such a terrible creature, pray? *Mon Dieu*, no! A little stern, that was all, with a sweet smile which promised instant pardon to every culprit. But M. Joyeuse was naturally cowardly and

timid; twenty years of housekeeping with a masterful woman, "a person of gentle birth," had enslaved him forever, like those convicts who are subjected to surveillance for a certain period after their sentences have expired. And he was subjected to it for life.

One evening the Joyeuse family was assembled in the small salon, the last relic of its splendor, where there still were two stuffed arm-chairs, an abundance of crochet-work, a piano, two Carcel lamps with little green caps, and a small table covered with trivial ornaments.

The true family exists only among the lowly.

For economy's sake only one fire was lighted for the whole house, and only one lamp around which all their occupations, all their diversions were grouped; an honest family lamp, whose old-fashioned shade — with night scenes, studded with brilliant points — had been the wonder and the delight of all the girls in their infancy. Emerging gracefully from the shadow of the rest of the room, four youthful faces, fair or dark, smiling or engrossed, bent forward in the warm, cheerful rays, which illumined them to the level of the eyes and seemed to feed the fire of their glances, the radiant youth beneath their transparent brows, to watch over them, to shelter them, to protect them from the black cold wind without, from ghosts, pitfalls, misery and terror, from all the sinister things that lurk in an out-of-the-way quarter of Paris on a winter's night.

Thus assembled in a small room near the top of the deserted house, in the warmth and security of its neatly kept and comfortable home, the Joyeuse family resembles a family of birds in a nest at the top of a tall tree. They sew and read and talk a little. A burst of flame, the crackling of the fire, are the only sounds to be heard, save for an occasional exclamation from M. Joyeuse, who sits just outside of his little circle, hiding in the shadow his anxious brow and all the vagaries of his imagination. Now he fancies that, in the midst of the distress by which he is overwhelmed, the absolute necessity of confessing everything to his children to-night, to-morrow at latest, unforeseen succor comes to him. Hemerlingue, seized with remorse, sends to him, to all the others who worked on the Tunisian loan, the accustomed December bonus. It is brought by a tall footman: "From Monsieur le Baron." The *Imaginaire* says this aloud. The pretty faces turn to look at him; they laugh and move about, and the poor wretch wakes with a start.

Oh! how he reviles himself now for his delay in confessing everything, for the fallacious security which he has encouraged in his home and which he will have to destroy at one blow. Why need he have criticised that Tunisian loan? He even blames himself now for having declined a position at the *Caisse Territoriale*. Had he the right to decline it? Ah! what a pitiful head of a family, who lacked strength to maintain or to defend the welfare of his dear ones. And, in presence of the

charming group sitting within the rays of the lamp, whose tranquil aspect is in such glaring contrast to his inward agitation, he is seized with remorse, which assails his feeble mind so fiercely that his secret comes to his lips, is on the point of escaping him in an outburst of sobs, when a ring at the bell — not an imaginary ring — startles them all and checks him as he is about to speak.

Who could have come at that hour? They had lived in seclusion since the mother's death, receiving almost no visitors. André Maranne, when he came down to pass a few moments with them, knocked familiarly after the manner of those to whom a door is always open. Profound silence in the salon, a long colloquy on the landing. At last the old servant — she had been in the family as long as the lamp — introduced a young man, a perfect stranger, who stopped suddenly, spellbound, at sight of the charming picture presented by the four darlings grouped about the table. He entered with an abashed, somewhat awkward air. However, he set forth very clearly the purpose of his call. He was recommended to apply to M. Joyeuse by a worthy man of his acquaintance, old Passajon, to give him lessons in book-keeping. A friend of his was involved in some large financial enterprises, a stock company of some size. He was anxious to be of service to him by keeping an eye upon the employment of his funds and the rectitude of his associates' operations; but he was a lawyer, with a very imperfect knowledge of financial matters and the vernacular of the banking

business. Could not M. Joyeuse, in a few months, with three or four lessons a week — "

"Why, yes indeed, monsieur, yes indeed," stammered the father, dazed by this unhoped-for chance; "I will willingly undertake to fit you in a month or two for this work of examining accounts. Where shall we have the lessons?"

"Here, if you please," said the young man, "for I am anxious that nobody should know that I am working at it. But I shall be very sorry if I am to put everybody to flight every time I appear, as I seem to have done this evening."

It was a fact that, as soon as the visitor opened his mouth, the four curly heads had disappeared, with much whispering and rustling of skirts, and the salon appeared very bare now that the great circle of white light was empty.

Always quick to take alarm where his daughters were concerned, M. Joyeuse replied that "the young ladies always retired early," in a short, sharp tone which said as plainly as could be: "Let us confine our conversation to our lessons, young man, I beg."

Thereupon they agreed upon the days and the hours in the evening.

As for the terms, that would be for monsieur to determine.

Monsieur named a figure.

The clerk turned scarlet; it was what he earned at Hemerlingue's.

"Oh! no, that is too much."

But the other would not listen; he hemmed and

hawed and rolled his tongue around as if he were trying to say something that it was very difficult to say; then with sudden resolution:

"Here is your first month's pay."

"But, monsieur —"

The young man insisted. He was a stranger. It was fair that he should pay in advance. Evidently Passajon had told him. M. Joyeuse understood and said, beneath his breath: "Thanks, oh! thanks!" so deeply moved that words failed him. Life, it meant life for a few months, time to turn around, to find a situation. His darlings would be deprived of nothing. They would have their New Year's gifts. O Providence!

"Until Wednesday, then, Monsieur Joyeuse."

"Until Wednesday, Monsieur —— ?"

"De Géry — Paul de Géry."

They parted, equally dazzled, enchanted, one by the appearance of that unexpected saviour, the other by the lovely tableau of which he had caught a glimpse, all those maidens grouped around the table covered with books and papers and skeins, with an air of purity, of hard-working probity. That sight opened up to de Géry a whole new Paris, brave, domestic, very different from that with which he was already familiar, a Paris of which the writers of feuilletons and the reporters never speak, and which reminded him of his province, with an additional element, namely, the charm which the surrounding hurly-burly and turmoil impart to the peaceful shelter that they do not reach.

VI.

FELICIA RUYS.

"By the way, what have you done with your son, Jenkins? Why do we never see him at your house now? He was an attractive boy."

As she said this in the tone of disdainful acerbity in which she always addressed the Irishman, Felicia was at work on the bust of the Nabob which she had just begun, adjusting her model, taking up and putting down the modelling tool, wiping her hands with a quick movement on the little sponge, while the light and peace of a lovely Sunday afternoon flooded the circular glass-walled studio. Felicia "received" every Sunday, if receiving consisted in leaving her door open and allowing people to come and go and sit down a moment, without stirring from her work for them, or even breaking off a discussion she might have begun, to welcome new arrivals. There were artists with shapely heads and bright red beards, and here and there the white poll of an old man, sentimental friends of the elder Ruys; then there were connoisseurs, men of the world, bankers, brokers, and some young swells who came rather to see the fair sculptress than

her sculpture, so that they would have the right to say that evening at the club: "I was at Felicia's to-day." Among them Paul de Géry, silent, engrossed by an admiration which sank a little deeper in his heart day by day, strove to comprehend the beautiful sphinx, arrayed in purple cashmere and unbleached lace, who worked bravely away in the midst of her clay, a burnisher's apron — reaching nearly to the neck — leaving naught visible save the proud little face with those transparent tones, those gleams as of veiled rays with which intellect and inspiration give animation to the features. Paul never forgot what had been said of her in his presence, he tried to form an opinion for himself, was beset by doubt and perplexity, yet fascinated; vowed every time that he would never come again, yet never missed a Sunday. There was another fixture, always in the same spot, a little woman with gray, powdered hair and a lace handkerchief around her pink face; a pastel somewhat worn by years, who smiled sweetly in the discreet light of a window recess, her hands lying idly upon her lap, in fakir-like immobility. Jenkins, always in good humor, with his beaming face, his black eyes, and his apostolic air, went about from one to another, known and loved by all. He too never missed one of Felicia's days; and in very truth he displayed great patience, for all the sharp words of the artist and of the pretty woman as well were reserved for him alone. Without seeming to notice it, with the same smiling indulgent serenity, he continued to court the society of the daughter of his old friend

Ruys, of whom he had been so fond and whom he had attended until his last breath.

On this occasion, however, the question that Felicia propounded to him on the subject of his son seemed to him extremely disagreeable; and there was a frown upon his face, a genuine expression of ill-humor, as he replied:

"Faith, I know no more than you as to what has become of him. He has turned his back upon us altogether. He was bored with us. He cares for nothing but his Bohemia — "

Felicia gave a bound which made them all start, and with flashing eye and quivering nostril retorted:

"That is too much. Look you, Jenkins, what do you call Bohemia? A charming word, by the way, which should evoke visions of long wandering jaunts in the sunlight, halting in shady nooks, the first taste of luscious fruits and sparkling fountains, taken at random on the highroads. But since you have made of the word with all the charm attaching to it a stigma and an insult, to whom do you apply it? To certain poor long-haired devils, in love with freedom in rags and tatters, who starve to death on fifth floors, looking at the sky at too close quarters, or seeking rhymes under tiles through which the rain drips; to those idiots, fewer and fewer in number, who in their horror of the conventional, the traditional, of the dense stupidity of life, have taken a standing jump over the edge. But that 's the way it used to be, I tell you. That 's the Bohemia of Murger, with the hospital at the end, the terror of children, the comfort of kindred,

Little Red Riding Hood eaten by the wolf. That state of things came to an end a long while ago. To-day you know perfectly well that artists are the most well-behaved people on earth, that they earn money, pay their debts and do their best to resemble the ordinary man. There is no lack of genuine Bohemians, however; our society is made up of them, but they are found more particularly in your circle. *Parbleu!* they are not labelled on the outside, and no one distrusts them; but so far as the uncertainty of existence and lack of order are concerned, they have no reason to envy those whom they so disdainfully call 'irregulars.' Ah! if one knew all the baseness, all the unheard-of, monstrous experiences that may be masked by a black coat, the most correct of your horrible modern garments! Jenkins, at your house the other evening, I amused myself counting all those adventurers of high — "

The little old lady, pink-cheeked and powdered, said to her softly from her seat:

"Felicia — take care — "

But she went on without listening to her:

"Who is this Monpavon, Doctor? And Bois-l'Héry? And Mora himself? And — "

She was on the point of saying, "And the Nabob?" but checked herself.

"And how many others! Oh! really, I advise you to speak contemptuously of Bohemia. Why, your clientage as a fashionable physician, O sublime Jenkins, is made up of nothing else. Bohemia of manufacturing, of finance, of politics; fallen

stars, the tainted of all castes, and the higher you go the more of them there are, because high rank gives impunity and wealth closes many mouths."

She spoke with great animation, harshly, her lip curling in fierce disdain. The other laughed a false laugh and assumed an airy, condescending tone. "Ah! madcap! madcap!" And his glance, anxious and imploring, rested upon the Nabob, as if to beseech his forgiveness for that flood of impertinent paradoxes.

But Jansoulet, far from appearing to be vexed, — he who was so proud to pose for that lovely artist, so puffed up by the honor conferred upon him — nodded his head approvingly.

"She is right, Jenkins," he said, "she is right. We are the real Bohemia. Look at me, for instance, and Hemerlingue, two of the greatest handlers of money in Paris. When I think where we started from, all the trades that we tried our hands at! Hemerlingue, an old regimental sutler; and myself, who carried bags of grain on the wharves at Marseille for a living. And then the strokes of luck by which our fortunes were made, as indeed all fortunes are made nowadays. Bless my soul! Just look under the peristyle at the Bourse from three to five. But I beg your pardon, mademoiselle, with my mania for gesticulating when I talk, I've spoiled my pose — let's see, will this do?"

"It's of no use," said Felicia, throwing down her modelling-tool with the gesture of a spoiled child. "I can do nothing more to-day."

She was a strange girl, this Felicia. A true child of an artist, a genial and dissipated artist, according to the romantic tradition, such as Sébastien Ruys was. She had never known her mother, being the fruit of one of those ephemeral passions which suddenly enter a sculptor's bachelor life, as swallows enter a house of which the door is always open, and go out again at once, because they cannot build nests there.

On that occasion the lady, on taking flight, had left with the great artist, then in the neighborhood of forty, a beautiful child whom he had acknowledged and reared, and who became the joy and passion of his life. Felicia had remained with her father until she was thirteen, importing a childish, refining element into that studio crowded with idlers, models, and huge greyhounds lying at full length on divans. There was a corner set aside for her, for her attempts at sculpture, a complete equipment on a microscopic scale, a tripod and wax; and old Ruys would say to all who came in:

"Don't go over there. Don't disturb anything. That 's the little one's corner."

The result was that at ten years of age she hardly knew how to read and handled the modelling-tool with marvellous skill. Ruys would have liked to keep the child, who never annoyed him in any way, with him permanently, a tiny member of the great brotherhood. But it was a pitiful thing to see the little maid exposed to the free and easy manners of the habitués of the house, the incessant going and coming of models, the discus-

sions concerning an art that is purely physical, so to speak; and at the uproarious Sunday dinner-table, too, sitting in the midst of five or six women, with all of whom her father was on the most intimate terms, actresses, dancers, singers, who, when dinner was at an end, smoked with the rest, their elbows on the table, revelling in the salacious anecdotes so relished by the master of the house. Luckily, childhood is protected by the resistant power of innocence, a polished surface over which all forms of pollution glide harmlessly. Felicia was noisy, uproarious, badly brought up, but was untainted by all that passed over her little mind because it was so near the ground.

Every summer she went to pass a few days with her godmother, Constance Crenmitz, the elder Crenmitz, who was for so long a time called by all Europe the "illustrious dancer," and who was living quietly in seclusion at Fontainebleau.

The arrival of the "little devil" introduced into the old lady's life, for a time, an element of excitement from which she had the whole year to recover. The frights that the child caused her with her audacious exploits in leaping and riding, the passionate outbreaks of that untamed nature, made the visit both a delight and a terrible trial to her, — a delight, because she worshipped Felicia, the only domestic tie left the poor old salamander, retired after thirty years of *battus* in the glare of the footlights; a trial, because the demon pitilessly pillaged the ex-dancer's apartments, which were as dainty and neat and sweet-smelling as her

dressing-room at the Opéra, and embellished with a museum of souvenirs dated from all the theatres in the world.

Constance Crenmitz was the sole feminine element in Felicia's childhood. Frivolous, shallow, having all her life kept her mind enveloped in pink swaddling-clothes, she had at all events a dainty knack at housekeeping, and agile fingers clever at sewing, embroidering, arranging furniture, and leaving the trace of their deft, painstaking touch in every corner of a room. She alone undertook to train that wild young plant, and to awaken with care the womanly instincts in that strange creature, on whose figure cloaks and furs, all the elegant inventions of fashion, fell in folds too stiff, or performed other strange antics.

It was the dancer again — surely the little Ruys must not be abandoned — who, triumphing over the paternal selfishness, compelled the sculptor to assent to a necessary separation, when Felicia was twelve or thirteen years old; furthermore, she assumed the responsibility of finding a suitable boarding school, and purposely selected a very rich but very bourgeois establishment, pleasantly situated in a sparsely-settled faubourg, in a huge old-fashioned mansion, surrounded by high walls and tall trees, — a sort of convent, minus the restraint and contempt for serious studies.

Indeed, a great deal of hard work was done at Madame Belin's establishment, with no opportunities to go out except on great festivals, and no communication with the outside world except a

visit from one's relatives on Thursday, in a little garden of flowering shrubs, or in the vast parlor with the carved and gilded panels above the doors. Felicia's first appearance in that almost monastic institution caused considerable commotion; her costume, selected by the Austrian ballet-dancer, her curly hair falling to the waist, her ungainly, boyish bearing, gave rise to some ill-natured remarks; but she was a Parisian and readily adapted herself to all situations, to all localities. In a few days she wore more gracefully than any of the others the little black apron, to which the most coquettish attached their watches, the straight skirt — a stern and cruel requirement at that period, when the prevailing fashion enlarged the circumference of woman with an infinite number of ruffles and flounces — and the prescribed arrangement of the hair, in two braids fastened together well down on the neck, after the fashion of Roman peasants.

Strangely enough, the assiduous work of the classes, their tranquil regularity, suited Felicia's nature, all intelligence and animation, in which a taste for study was enlivened by an overflow of childish spirits in the hours of recreation. Every one loved her. Among those children of great manufacturers, Parisian notaries and gentleman-farmers, a substantial little world by themselves, somewhat inclined to stiffness and formality, the well-known name of old Ruys, and the respect which is universally manifested in Paris for a high reputation as an artist, gave to Felicia a position apart from the

rest and greatly envied; a position made even more brilliant by her success in her studies, by a genuine talent for drawing, and by her beauty, that element of superiority which produces its effect even upon very young girls.

In the purer atmosphere of the boarding-school, she felt the keenest pleasure in making herself womanly, in resuming her true sex, in learning order, regularity, in a different sense from that inculcated by the amiable dancer, whose kisses always retained a taste of rouge, and whose embraces always left an impression of unnaturally round arms. Père Ruys was enchanted, every time that he went to see his daughter, to find her more of a young lady, able to enter and walk about and leave a room with the pretty courtesy that made all of Madame Belin's boarders long for the *frou-frou* of a long train.

At first he came often, then, as he lacked time for all the commissions accepted and undertaken, the advances upon which helped to pay for the disorder and heedlessness of his life, he was seen less frequently in the parlor. At last disease took a hand. Brought to earth by hopeless anæmia, for weeks he did not leave the house, nor work. He insisted upon seeing his daughter; and from the peaceful, health-giving shadow of the boarding-school Felicia returned to her father's studio, still haunted by the same cronies, the parasites that cling to every celebrity, among whom sickness had introduced a new figure in the person of Dr. Jenkins.

That handsome, open face, the air of frankness and serenity diffused over the whole person of that already well known physician, who talked of his art so freely, yet performed miraculous cures, and his assiduous attentions to her father, made a deep impression on the girl. Jenkins soon became the friend, the confidant, a vigilant and gentle guardian. Sometimes in the studio, when some one — the father himself most frequently — made a too equivocal remark or a ribald jest, the Irishman would frown and make a little noise with his lips, or else would divert Felicia's attention. He often took her to pass the day with Madame Jenkins, exerting himself to prevent her from becoming once more the wild creature of the ante-boarding school days, or indeed the something worse than that which she threatened to become, in the moral abandonment, the saddest of all forms of abandonment, in which she was left.

But the girl had a more powerful protector than the irreproachable but worldly example of the fair Madame Jenkins: the art which she adored, the enthusiasm it aroused in her essentially open nature, the sentiment of beauty, of truth, which passed from her thoughtful brain, teeming with ideas, into her fingers with a little quiver of the nerves, a longing to see the thing done, the image realized. All day she worked at her sculpture, gave shape to her reveries, with the happy tact of instinct-guided youth, which imparts so much charm to first works; that prevented her from regretting too keenly the austere régime of the

Belin institution, which was as perfect a safeguard and as light as the veil of a novice who has not taken her vows; and it also shielded her from perilous conversations to which in her one absorbing preoccupation she paid no heed.

Ruys was proud of the talent springing up by his side. As he grew weaker from day to day, having already reached the stage at which the artist regrets his vanishing powers, he followed Felicia's progress as a consolation for the close of his own career. The modelling-tool, which trembled in his hand, was seized at his side with virile firmness and self-assurance, tempered by all of the innate refinement of her being that a woman can apply to the realization of her ideal of an art. A curious sensation is that twofold paternity, that survival of genius, which abandons the one who is going away to pass into the one who is coming, like the lovely domestic birds which, on the eve of a death, desert the threatened roof for a more cheerful dwelling.

In the last days of her father's life, Felicia — a great artist, and still a child — did half of her father's work for him, and nothing could be more touching than that collaboration of the father and daughter, in the same studio, sculptors of the same group. Things did not always run smoothly. Although she was her father's pupil, Felicia's individuality was already inclined to rebel against any arbitrary guidance. She had the audacity of beginners, the presentiment of a great future felt only by youthful geniuses, and, in opposition to the

romantic traditions of Sébastien Ruys, a tendency toward modern realism, a feeling that she must plant that glorious old flag upon some new monument.

Then there would be terrible scenes, disputes from which the father would come forth vanquished, annihilated by his daughter's logic, amazed at the rapid progress children make on the highroads, while their elders, who have opened the gates for them, remain stationary at the point of departure. When she was working for him Felicia yielded more readily; but concerning her own work she was intractable. For instance, the *Joueur de Boules*, her first exhibited work, which made such a tremendous hit at the Salon of 1862, was the occasion of violent disputes between the two artists, of such fierce controversy that Jenkins had to intervene and to superintend the removal of the figure, which Ruys had threatened to break.

Aside from these little dramas, which had no effect upon the love of their hearts, those two worshipped each other, with the presentiment and, as the days passed, the cruel certainty of an impending separation; when suddenly there came a horrible episode in Felicia's life. One day Jenkins took her home to dinner with him, as he often did. Madame Jenkins and her son were away for two days; but the doctor's years, his semi-paternal intimacy, justified him in inviting to his house, even in his wife's absence, a girl whose fifteen years, the fifteen years of an Eastern Jewess resplendent with premature beauty, left her still almost a child.

The dinner was very lively, Jenkins cordial and agreeable as always. Then they went into the doctor's office; and suddenly, as they sat on the divan, talking in the most intimate and friendly way concerning her father, his health and their joint work, Felicia had a feeling as of the cold blast from an abyss between herself and that man, followed by the brutal embrace of a satyr's claw. She saw a Jenkins totally unknown to her, wild-eyed, stammering, with brutish laugh and insulting hands. In the surprise, the unexpectedness of that outbreak of the animal instinct, any other than Felicia, any child of her years, but genuinely innocent, would have been lost. The thing that saved her, poor child, was her knowledge. She had heard so many stories at her father's table! And then her art, her life at the studio. She was no *ingénue*. She at once understood what that embrace meant, she squirmed and struggled, then, finding that she was not strong enough, screamed. He was frightened, released her, and suddenly she found herself on her feet, free, with the man at her knees, weeping and imploring forgiveness. He had yielded to an attack of frenzy. She was so lovely, he loved her so dearly. He had struggled for months. But now it was all over — never again, oh! never again. He would not even touch the hem of her dress. She did not reply, but tremblingly rearranged her hair and her clothes with frenzied fingers. Go, she must go at once, alone. He sent a servant with her, and whispered, as she entered the carriage: "Above

all things, not a word of this at home. It would kill your father." He knew her so well, he was so sure of closing her mouth by that thought, the villain, that he came the next day as if nothing had happened, effusive as always and with the same ingenuous face. She never did mention the incident to her father or to anybody else. But from that day a change took place in her, as if the springs of her pride were relaxed. She became capricious, had fits of lassitude, a curl of disgust in her smile, and sometimes she yielded to sudden outbursts of wrath against her father, and cast scornful glances upon him, rebuking him for his failure to watch over her.

"What is the matter with her?" Père Ruys would ask; and Jenkins, with the authority of a physician, would attribute it to her age and a physical trouble. He himself avoided speaking to the girl, relying upon time to efface the sinister impression, and not despairing of obtaining what he desired, for he desired more eagerly than ever, being in the grasp of the insane passion of a man of forty-seven, the incurable passion of maturity; and that was the hypocrite's punishment. His daughter's strange state caused the sculptor genuine distress; but it was of brief duration. Ruys suddenly expired, fell to pieces all at once, like all those whom Jenkins attended. His last words were:

"Jenkins, I place my daughter in your care."

The words were so ironical in all their mournfulness that Jenkins, who was present at the last, could not avoid turning pale.

Felicia was even more stupefied than sorrowful. To the feeling of amazement at death, which she had never seen before, and which appeared in a guise so dear to her, was added the feeling of a terrible loneliness surrounded by darkness and perils.

Several friends of the sculptor assembled in a family council to deliberate concerning the future of the unfortunate, penniless orphan. They had found fifty francs in the catch-all in which Sébastien kept his money on a little commode in the studio, well known to his needy friends, who had recourse to it without scruple. No other patrimony, in cash at all events; only a most superb collection of artistic objects and curios, a few valuable pictures and some scattered outstanding claims hardly sufficient to cover his innumerable debts. They talked of a sale at auction. Felicia, on being consulted, replied that it was a matter of indifference to her whether they sold all or none, but that she begged them, for God's sake, to leave her in peace.

The sale did not take place, however, thanks to the godmother, the excellent Crenmitz, who suddenly made her appearance, as tranquil and gentle as always:

"Don't listen to them, my child, sell nothing. Your old Constance has fifteen thousand francs a year which were intended for you. You shall have the benefit of them now, that's all. We will live together here. I will not be in the way, you will see. You can work at your sculpture, while I keep the house. Does that suit you?"

It was said so affectionately, in the childish accent of foreigners expressing themselves in French, that the girl was deeply moved. Her stony heart opened, a burning flood poured from her eyes and she threw herself, buried herself in the ex-dancer's arms: "Oh! godmother, how good you are! Yes, yes; don't leave me again — stay with me always. Life frightens and disgusts me. I see so much hypocrisy and lying!" And when the old woman had made herself a silky, embroidered nest in the house, which resembled a traveller's camp filled with the treasures of all lands, those two widely different natures took up their life together.

It was no small sacrifice that Constance had made to the little demon, to leave her retreat at Fontainebleau for Paris, which she held in horror. From the day when the ballet-dancer, once famous for her extravagant caprices, who squandered princely fortunes between her five parted fingers, had descended from the realm of apotheoses with a last remnant of their dazzling glare still lingering in her eyes, and had tried to resume the life of ordinary mortals, to administer her little income and her modest household, she had been subjected to a multitude of unblushing attempts at extortion and schemes which were readily successful in view of the ignorance of that poor butterfly, who was afraid of reality and constantly coming in contact with all its unknown difficulties. In Felicia's house the responsibility became far more serious, because of the extravagant methods long ago inaugurated

by the father and continued by the daughter, both artists having the utmost contempt for economy. She had other difficulties, too, to overcome. She could not endure the studio, with its permanent odor of tobacco smoke, with the cloud, impenetrable to her, in which artistic discussions and ideas, expressed in their baldest form, were confounded in vague eddies of glowing vapor which invariably gave her the sick headache. The *blague* was especially terrifying to her. Being a foreigner, a former divinity of the ballet green-room, fed upon superannuated compliments, gallantries *à la Dorat* she was unable to understand it, and was dismayed at the wild exaggerations, the paradoxes of those Parisians whose wits were sharpened by the liberty of the studio.

She whose wit had consisted entirely in the agility of her feet was awed by her new surroundings and relegated to the position of a simple companion; and to see that amiable old creature, silent and smiling, sitting in the bright light of the rounded window, her knitting on her knees, like one of Chardin's bourgeoises, or walking quickly up the long Rue de Chaillot where the nearest market was situated, with her cook at her side, one would never have dreamed that the worthy woman had once held kings, princes, all the susceptible portion of the nobility and the world of finance, subject to the whim of her toes and her gauze skirts.

Paris is full of these extinct stars which have fallen back into the crowd.

Some of these celebrities, these conquerors of a former time, retain a gnawing rage in their hearts; others, on the contrary, dwell blissfully upon the past, ruminate in ineffable content all their glorious, bygone joys, seeking only repose, silence and obscurity, wherein they may remember and meditate, so that, when they die, we are amazed to learn that they were still living.

Constance Crenmitz was one of those happy mortals. But what a strange artists' household was that of those two women, equally childlike, contributing to the common stock inexperience and ambition, the tranquillity of an accomplished destiny and the feverish activity of a life in its prime, all the differences indeed that were indicated by the contrast between that blonde, white as a withered rose, who seemed to be dressed, beneath her fair complexion, in a remnant of Bengal fire, and that brunette, with the regular features, who almost invariably enveloped her beauty in dark stuffs, simply made, as if with a semblance of masculinity.

Unforeseen emergencies, caprice, ignorance of even the most trivial things, led to extreme confusion in the management of the household, from which they were sometimes unable to extricate themselves except by enforced privations, by dismissing servants, by reforms laughable in their exaggeration. During one of those crises Jenkins made delicate, carefully veiled offers of assistance which were repelled with scorn by Felicia.

"It is n't right," said Constance, "to be so rude

to that poor doctor. After all, there was nothing insulting in what he said. An old friend of your father's."

"That man, anybody's friend! Oh! what a superb Tartuffe!"

And Felicia, hardly able to contain herself, twisted her wrath into irony, mimicked Jenkins, the affected gestures, the hand on the heart; then, puffing out her cheeks, said in a hoarse, whistling voice, full of false effusiveness:

"We must be kind, we must be humane. To do good without hope of reward! — that is the secret."

Constance laughed, in spite of herself, till the tears ran down her cheeks, the resemblance was so perfect.

"Never mind, you were too harsh — you will end by driving him away."

"Oh! indeed!" said a shake of the girl's head.

In truth, he continued to come to the house, always affable and sweet, dissembling his passion, which was visible only when he became jealous of new-comers, overwhelming with attentions the ex-ballet-dancer, to whom his pleasant manners were gratifying in spite of everything, and who recognized in him a man of her own time, of the time when men paid their respects to women by kissing their hand, with a complimentary remark as to their appearance.

One morning, Jenkins, having looked in during his round of visits, found Constance alone and unoccupied in the reception room.

"I am mounting guard, Doctor, as you see," she said calmly.

"How does that happen?"

"Why, Felicia's at work. She does n't want to be disturbed and the servants are so stupid. I am carrying out her orders myself."

Then, as she saw the Irishman walk toward the studio, she added:

"No, no, don't go there. She gave me strict orders not to let any one go in."

"Very good, but I —"

"I beg you not — you will get me a scolding."

Jenkins was about to withdraw, when a peal of laughter from Felicia reached their ears through the portière and made him raise his head.

"So she is n't alone?"

"No. The Nabob is with her. They are having a sitting — for the bust."

"But why this mystery? It 's very strange."

He strode back and forth, raging inwardly, but holding himself back.

At last he broke out.

It was improper beyond expression to allow a girl to be closeted in that way with a man.

He was astonished that so serious-minded, so devout a person as Constance — What did it look like?

The old lady gazed at him in stupefaction. As if Felicia were like other girls! And then, what danger could there be with the Nabob, such a serious man and so ugly? Moreover, Jenkins ought to know well enough that Felicia never

consulted anybody, that she did only what she chose.

"No, no, it's impossible; I cannot allow this," exclaimed the Irishman.

And, paying no further heed to the dancer, who threw up her arms to call heaven to witness what was taking place, he walked toward the studio; but, instead of entering at once, he opened the door gently and raised a corner of the hanging, so that a part of the room, just that part where the Nabob was posing, was visible to him, although at a considerable distance.

Jansoulet was seated, without a cravat, with his waistcoat thrown open, talking excitedly, in an undertone. Felicia answered in laughing whispers. The sitting was very animated. Then there was a pause, a rustling of skirts, and the artist, going up to her model, turned his linen collar back all the way around, with a familiar gesture, letting her hand run lightly over the tanned skin.

That Ethiopian face, in which the muscles quivered with the intoxication of supreme content, with its great eyelids lowered like those of a sleeping beast being tickled with a straw, the bold outline of the girl as she leaned over that outlandish face to verify its proportions, and then a violent, irresistible gesture, seizing the slender hand as it passed and pressing it to two thick, trembling lips, — Jenkins saw all this in a red glare.

The noise that he made in entering caused the two to resume their respective positions, and in the bright light which dazzled his prying, catlike

eyes, he saw the girl standing before him, indignant, dumfounded: "What is this? Who has dared?" and the Nabob on his platform, with his collar turned back, petrified, monumental.

Jenkins, somewhat abashed, dismayed by his own audacity, stammered some words of apology. He had something very urgent to say to M. Jansoulet, very important information which could not be delayed. He knew from a reliable source that there would be a distribution of crosses on March 16th. The Nabob's face, momentarily contracted, at once relaxed.

"Ah! really?"

He abandoned his pose. The matter was well worth considering, deuce take it! M. de la Perrière, one of the Empress's secretaries, had been directed by her to visit the shelter of Bethlehem. Jenkins had come to take the Nabob to the secretary's office at the Tuileries and make inquiries. That visit to Bethlehem meant a cross for him.

"Come, let us be off; I am with you, my dear doctor."

He bore Jenkins no ill-will for disturbing him, and he feverishly tied his cravat, forgetting under the stress of his new emotion the agitation of a moment before, for with him ambition took precedence of everything.

While the two men talked together in undertones, Felicia, standing before them, with quivering nostrils and lip curling in scorn, watched them as if to say: "Well! I am waiting."

Jansoulet apologized for being obliged to inter-

rupt the sitting; but a visit of the utmost importance — She smiled pityingly.

"Go, go. At the point where we are now, I can work without you."

"Oh! yes," said the doctor, "the bust is almost finished. It's a fine piece of work," he added, with the air of a connoisseur.

And, relying on the compliment to cover his retreat, he was slinking away, crestfallen; but Felicia fiercely called him back:

"Stay, you. I have something to say to you."

He saw by her expression that he must comply, under pain of an outbreak.

"With your permission, my friend? Mademoiselle has a word to say to me. My coupé is at the door. Get in, I will be with you in a moment."

When the studio door closed upon those heavy departing footsteps, they looked each other in the face.

"You must be either drunk or mad to venture to do such a thing. What! you presume to enter my studio when I do not choose to receive? Why this violence? By what right?"

"By the right that desperate, unconquerable passion gives."

"Be quiet, Jenkins; those are words that I do not wish to hear. I let you come here through pity, through habit, because my father was fond of you. But never speak to me again of your — love" — she said the word very low, as if it were a disgrace — "or you will see me no more, even

though I should be driven to die in order to escape you for good and all."

A child taken in fault does not bend his head more humbly than Jenkins as he replied:

"True — I was wrong. A moment of madness, of blindness. But why do you take pleasure in tearing my heart as you do?"

"As if I were thinking of you!"

"Whether you are thinking of me or not, I am here, I see what is going on, and your coquetry pains me terribly."

A slight flush rose in her cheeks at that reproach.

"I, a coquette! With whom?"

"With him," said the Irishman, pointing to the superb apelike bust.

She tried to laugh.

"The Nabob. What nonsense!"

"Do not lie. Do you think I am blind, that I don't understand all your manœuvres? You stay alone with him a long while. I was at the door just now. I saw you." He lowered his voice as if his breath had failed him. "What are you after, in heaven's name, you strange, heartless child? I have seen you repel the handsomest, the noblest, the greatest. That little de Géry devours you with his eyes, but you pay no heed to him. Even the Duc de Mora has not succeeded in reaching your heart. And this man, a shocking, vulgar creature, who is n't thinking of you, who has something very different from love in his head — you saw how he went away just now! What

are you aiming at? What do you expect from him?"

"I intend — I intend that he shall marry me. There."

Coolly, in a softer tone, as if the confession had drawn her nearer to the man she despised so bitterly, she set forth her reasons. She had luxurious, extravagant tastes, unmethodical habits which nothing could overcome and which would infallibly lead her to poverty and destitution, and good Crenmitz too, who allowed herself to be ruined without a word. In three years, four years at most, it would be all over. And then would come debts and desperate expedients, the ragged gowns and old shoes of poor artists' households. Or else the lover, the keeper, that is to say slavery and degradation.

"Nonsense," said Jenkins. "What of me, am I not here?"

"Anything rather than you," she said, drawing herself up. "No, what I must have, what I will have, is a husband to protect me from others and from myself, to keep me from a mass of black things of which I am afraid when life becomes a bore to me, from abysses into which I feel that I may plunge, — some one who will love me while I work, and will relieve my poor old exhausted fairy from doing sentry duty. That man suits me and I have had my eye on him ever since I first saw him. He is ugly to look at, but he seems kind; and then he is absurdly rich, and wealth, in that degree, must be amusing. Oh! I know all about

it. There probably is some black spot in his life which has brought him good luck. All that gold can't have been honestly come by. But tell me truly, Jenkins, with your hand on that heart which you invoke so often, do you think that I am a very tempting wife for an honest man? Consider: of all these young men who ask as a favor to be allowed to come here, what one has ever thought of asking for my hand? Never a single one. De Géry no more than the rest. I charm, but I terrify. That is easily understood. What can anyone expect of a girl brought up as I was, with no mother or family, tossed in a heap with my father's models and mistresses? Such mistresses, great God! And Jenkins for my only protector. Oh! when I think of it! When I think of it!"

And, with the memory of that already distant episode, thoughts came to her mind which inflamed her wrath. "Oh! yes, I am a child of chance, and this adventurer is just the husband for me."[1]

"At least you will wait until he's a widower," retorted Jenkins tranquilly. "And in that case you may have to wait a long while, for his Levantine looks to be in excellent health."

Felicia Ruys became livid.

"He is married?"

"Married, why, to be sure, and father of a lot of children. The whole outfit landed here two days ago."

She stood for a moment, speechless, her cheeks quivering.

[1] Je suis une fille *d'aventure*, et cet *aventurier* est bien le mari qu'il me faut.

In front of her the Nabob's broad visage, in shining clay, with its flat nose, its sensual good-humored mouth, seemed to cry aloud in its fidelity to life. She gazed at it a moment, then stepped toward it, and with a gesture of disgust overturned the high, wooden stand and the gleaming, greasy block itself, which fell to the floor a shapeless mass of mud.

VII.

JANSOULET AT HOME.

MARRIED he had been for twelve years, but had never mentioned the fact to any one of his Parisian acquaintances, by virtue of an acquired Oriental habit, the habit that Oriental peoples have of maintaining silence concerning their female relations. Suddenly it was learned that Madame was coming, that apartments must be made ready for her, her children and her women. The Nabob hired the whole second floor of the house on Place Vendôme, the previous tenant being sacrificed to Nabob prices. The stables were increased in size, the staff of servants was doubled; and then, one day, coachmen and carriages went to the Lyon station to fetch Madame, who arrived with a retinue of negresses, little negroes and gazelles, completely filling a long train that had been heated expressly for her all the way from Marseille.

She alighted in a terrible state of prostration, exhausted and bewildered by her long railroad journey, the first in her life, for she had been taken to Tunis as a child and had never left it. Two negroes carried her from the carriage to her apart-

ments in an armchair, which was always kept in the vestibule thereafter, ready for that difficult transportation. Madame Jansoulet could not walk upstairs, for it made her dizzy; she would not have an elevator because her weight made it squeak; besides, she never walked. An enormous creature, so bloated that it was impossible to assign her an age, but somewhere between twenty-five and forty, with rather a pretty face, but features all deformed by fat, lifeless eyes beneath drooping lids grooved like shells, trussed up in exported gowns, loaded with diamonds and jewels like a Hindoo idol, she was a most perfect specimen of the transplanted Europeans who are called Levantines. A strange race of obese Creoles, connected with our society by naught save language and dress, but enveloped by the Orient in its stupefying atmosphere, the subtle poisons of its opium-laden air, in which everything becomes limp and nerveless, from the tissues of the skin to the girdle around the waist, ay, even to the mind itself and the thought.

She was the daughter of an enormously wealthy Belgian, a dealer in coral at Tunis, in whose establishment Jansoulet had been employed for several months on his first arrival in the country. Mademoiselle Afchin, at that time a fascinating doll, with dazzling complexion and hair, and perfect health, came often to the counting-room for her father, in the great chariot drawn by mules which conveyed them to their beautiful villa of La Marse in the outskirts of Tunis. The child, always

décolleté, with gleaming white shoulders seen for a moment in a luxurious frame, dazzled the adventurer; and years after, when he had become rich, the favorite of the bey, and thought of settling down, his mind reverted to her. The child had changed into a stout, heavy, sallow girl. Her intellect, never of a high order, had become still more obtuse in the torpor of such a life as dormice lead, in the neglect of a father whose whole time and thought were given to business, and in the use of tobacco saturated with opium and of sweetmeats, — the torpor of her Flemish blood conjoined with Oriental indolence; and with all the rest, ill-bred, gluttonous, sensual, arrogant, a Levantine trinket brought to perfection.

But Jansoulet saw nothing of all that.

In his eyes she was then, she was always, down to the time of her arrival in Paris, a superior being, a person of the highest refinement, a Demoiselle Afchin; he spoke to her with respect, maintained a slightly humble and timid attitude toward her, gave her money without counting it, indulged her most extravagant caprices, her wildest whims, all the strange conceits of a Levantine's brain distracted by ennui and idleness. A single word justified everything; she was a Demoiselle Afchin. And yet they had nothing in common; he was always at the Kasbah or the Bardo, in attendance on the bey, paying his court to him, or else in his counting-room; she passed her day in bed, on her head a diadem of pearls worth three hundred thousand francs, which she never laid aside, brutalizing

herself by smoking, living as in a harem, admiring herself in the mirror, arraying herself in fine clothes, in company with several other Levantines, whose greatest joy consisted in measuring with their necklaces the girth of arms and legs which rivalled one another in corpulency, bringing forth children with whom she never concerned herself, whom she never saw, who had never even caused her suffering, for she was delivered under the influence of chloroform. A "bale" of white flesh perfumed with musk. And Jansoulet would say with pride: "I married a Demoiselle Afchin!"

Under Parisian skies and in the cold light of the capital, his disillusionment began. Having determined to set up a regular establishment, to receive, to give entertainments, the Nabob had sent for his wife, in order to place her at the head of his house. But when he saw that mass of stiff, crackling dry-goods, of Palais-Royal finery, alight at his door, and all the extraordinary outfit that followed her, he had a vague impression of a Queen Pomare in exile. The difficulty was that he had seen some genuine women of fashion and he made comparisons. He had planned a grand ball to celebrate her arrival, but he prudently abstained. Indeed Madame Jansoulet refused to receive any one. Her natural indolence was augmented by the homesickness which the cold yellow fog and the pouring rain had brought upon her as soon as she landed. She passed several days in bed, crying aloud like a child, declaring that they had brought her to Paris to kill her, and even rejecting the

slightest attentions from her women. She lay there roaring among her lace pillows, her hair in a tangled mass around her diadem, the windows closed and curtains tightly drawn, lamps lighted day and night, crying out that she wanted to go away—ay, to go away—ay; and it was a pitiful thing to see, in that tomb-like darkness, the half-filled trunks scattered over the carpet, the frightened gazelles, the negresses crouching around their hysterical mistress, groaning in unison, with haggard eyes, like the dogs of travellers in polar countries which go mad when they cannot see the sun.

The Irish doctor, upon being admitted to that distressing scene, had no success with his fatherly ways, his fine superficial phrases. Not at any price would the Levantine take the pearls with arsenical base, to give tone to her system. The Nabob was horrified. What was he to do? Send her back to Tunis with the children? That was hardly possible. He was definitively in disgrace there. The Hemerlingues had triumphed. A last insult had filled the measure to overflowing: on Jansoulet's departure the bey had commissioned him to have several millions of gold coined after a new pattern at the Paris Mint; then the commission had been abruptly withdrawn and given to Hemerlingue. Jansoulet, being publicly insulted, retorted with a public manifesto, offering all his property for sale, his palace on the Bardo presented to him by the former bey, his villas at La Marse, all of white marble, surrounded by magnificent gardens, his

counting rooms, the most commodious and most sumptuously furnished in the city, and instructing the intelligent Bompain to bring his wife and children to Paris in order to put the seal of finality to his departure. After such a display, it would be hard to return; that is what he tried to make Mademoiselle Afchin understand, but she replied only by prolonged groans. He strove to comfort her, to amuse her, but what form of distraction could be made to appeal to that abnormally apathetic nature? And then, could he change the skies of Paris, give back to the wretched Levantine her marble-tiled *patio*, where she used to pass long hours in a cool, delicious state of drowsiness, listening to the plashing of the water in the great alabaster fountain with three basins one above the other, and her gilded boat, covered with a purple awning and rowed by eight supple, muscular Tripolitan oarsmen over the lovely lake of El-Baheira, when the sun was setting? Sumptuous as were the apartments on Place Vendôme, they could not supply the place of those lost treasures. And she plunged deeper than ever in her despair. One habitué of the house succeeded, however, in drawing her out of it, Cabassu, who styled himself on his cards "professor of massage;" a stout dark thick-set man, redolent of garlic and hair-oil, square-shouldered, covered with hair to his eyes, who knew stories of Parisian seraglios, trivial anecdotes within the limited range of Madame's intellect. He came once to rub her, and she

wished to see him again, detained him. He was obliged to abandon all his other customers and to become the *masseur* of that able-bodied creature, at a salary equal to that of a senator, her page, her reader, her body-guard. Jansoulet, overjoyed to see that his wife was contented, was not conscious of the disgusting absurdity of the intimacy.

Cabassu was seen in the Bois, in the enormous and sumptuous calèche beside the favorite gazelle, at the back of the theatre boxes which the Levantine hired, for she went abroad now, revivified by her masseur's treatment and determined to be amused. She liked the theatre, especially farces or melodramas. The apathy of her unwieldy body was minimized in the false glare of the footlights. But she enjoyed Cardailhac's theatre most of all. There the Nabob was at home. From the first manager down to the last box-opener, the whole staff belonged to him. He had a key to the door leading from the corridor to the stage; and the salon attached to his box, decorated in Oriental fashion, with the ceiling hollowed out like a bee-hive, divans upholstered in camel's hair, the gas-jet enclosed in a little Moorish lantern, was admirably adapted for a nap during the tedious *entr'actes:* a delicate compliment from the manager to his partner's wife. Nor had that monkey of a Cardailhac stopped at that: detecting Mademoiselle Afchin's liking for the stage, he had succeeded in persuading her that she possessed an intuitive knowledge of all things pertaining to it,

and had ended by asking her to cast a glance in her leisure moments, the glance of an expert, upon such pieces as he sent to her. An excellent way of binding the partnership more firmly.

Poor manuscripts in blue or yellow covers, which hope has tied with slender ribbons, ye who take flight swelling with ambition and with dreams, who knows what hands will open you, turn your leaves, what prying fingers will deflower your unknown charm, that shining dust stored up by every new idea? Who passes judgment on you, and who condemns you? Sometimes, before going out to dinner, Jansoulet, on going up to his wife's room, would find her smoking in her easy-chair, with her head thrown back and piles of manuscript by her side, and Cabassu, armed with a blue pencil, reading in his hoarse voice and with his Bourg-Saint-Andéol intonation some dramatic lucubration which he cut and slashed remorselessly at the slightest word of criticism from the lady. "Don't disturb yourselves," the good Nabob's wave of the hand would say, as he entered the room on tiptoe. He would listen and nod his head admiringly as he looked at his wife. "She's an astonishing creature," he would say to himself, for he knew nothing of literature, and in that direction at all events he recognized Mademoiselle Afchin's superiority.

"She had the theatrical instinct," as Cardailhac said; but as an offset, the maternal instinct was entirely lacking. She never gave a thought to her children, abandoning them to the hands of

strangers, and, when they were brought to her once a month, contenting herself with giving them the flabby, lifeless flesh of her cheeks to kiss, between two puffs of a cigarette, and never making inquiries concerning the details of care and health which perpetuate the physical bond of motherhood, and make the true mother's heart bleed in sympathy with her child's slightest suffering.

They were three stout, heavy, apathetic boys, of eleven, nine, and seven years, with the Levantine's sallow complexion and premature bloated appearance, and their father's velvety, kindly eyes. They were as ignorant as young noblemen of the Middle Ages; in Tunis M. Bompain had charge of their studies, but in Paris the Nabob, intent upon giving them the benefit of a Parisian education, had placed them in the most stylish and most expensive boarding school, the Collège Bourdaloue, conducted by excellent Fathers, who aimed less at teaching their pupils than at moulding them into well-bred, reflecting men of the world, and who succeeded in producing little monstrosities, affected and ridiculous, scornful of play, absolutely ignorant, with no trace of spontaneity or childishness, and despairingly pert and forward. The little Jansoulets did not enjoy themselves overmuch in that hothouse for early fruits, notwithstanding the special privileges accorded to their immense wealth; they were really too neglected. Even the Creoles in the institution had correspondents and visitors; but they were never called to the parlor, nor was any relative of theirs known to the school authorities; from time

to time they received baskets of sweetmeats or windfalls of cake, and that was all. The Nabob, as he drove through Paris, would strip a confectioner's shop-window for their benefit and send the contents to the college with that affectionate impulsiveness blended with negro-like ostentation which characterized all his acts. It was the same with their toys, always too fine, too elaborate, of no earthly use, the toys which are made only for show and which the Parisian never buys. But the thing to which above all others the little Jansoulets owed the respectful consideration of pupils and masters was their well-filled purse, always ready for collections, for professorial entertainments, and for the charitable visits, the famous visits inaugurated by the Collège Bourdaloue, one of the tempting items on the programme of the institution, the admiration of impressionable minds.

Twice a month, turn and turn about, the pupils belonging to the little Society of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, established at the college on the model of the great society of that name, went in small detachments, unattended, like grown men, to carry succor and consolation to the farthest corners of the thickly-peopled faubourgs. In that way it was sought to teach them charity by experience, the art of finding out the wretchedness, the necessities of the people and of dressing their sores, always more or less repulsive, with a balsam of kind words and ecclesiastical maxims. To console, to convert the masses by the aid of childhood, to disarm religious incredulity by the youth and innocence

of the apostles; such was the purpose of that little society, a purpose that failed absolutely of realization, by the way. The children, well-dressed, well-fed, in excellent health, went only to addresses designated beforehand and found respectable poor people, sometimes a little ailing, but far too clean, already enrolled and relieved by the rich charitable organizations of the Church. They never happened upon one of those loathsome homes, where hunger, mourning, abject poverty, all forms of misery, physical and moral, are written in filth on the walls, in indelible wrinkles on the faces. Their visit was arranged in advance like that of the sovereign to the guard-house to taste the soldier's soup; the guard-house is notified and the soup seasoned for the royal palate. Have you seen those pictures in religious books, where a little communicant, with his bow on his arm and his taper in his hand, all combed and curled, goes to assist a poor old man lying on his wretched pallet with the whites of his eyes turned up to the sky? These charitable visits had the same conventional stage-setting and accent. The machine-like gestures of the little preachers with arms too short for the work, were answered by words learned by rote, so false as to set one's teeth on edge. The comical words of encouragement, the "consolation lavishly poured forth" in prize-book phrases by voices suggestive of young roosters with the influenza, called forth emotional blessings, the whining, sickening mummery of a church porch after vespers. And as soon as the young visitors' backs were turned, what an explo-

sion of laughter and shouting in the garret, what a dancing around the offerings brought, what an overturning of armchairs in which they have been feigning illness, what a pouring of boluses into the fire, a fire of ashes, very artistically arranged! When the little Jansoulets went to visit their parents, they were placed in charge of the man with the red fez, Bompain the indispensable. It was Bompain who took them to the Champs-Élysées, arrayed in English jackets, silk hats of the latest style — at seven years! — and with little canes dangling from the ends of their dogskin gloves. It was Bompain who superintended the victualling of the break on which he went with the children to the races, race-cards stuck in their hats around which green veils were twisted, wonderfully like the characters in lilliputian pantomimes whose comicality consists solely in the size of their heads compared with their short legs and dwarfish movements. They smoked and drank outrageously. Sometimes the man in the fez, himself hardly able to stand, brought them home horribly ill. And yet Jansoulet loved his little ones, especially the youngest, who, with his long hair and his doll-like aspect, reminded him of little Afchin in her carriage. But they were still at the age when children belong to the mother, when neither a stylish tailor nor accomplished masters nor a fashionable boarding-school nor the ponies saddled for the little men in the stable, when nothing in short takes the place of the watchful and attentive hand, the warmth and gayety of

the nest. The father was unable to give them that in any event; and then he was so busy!

A thousand matters, the *Caisse Territoriale*, the arrangement of the picture gallery, races at Tattersall's with Bois-l'Héry, some gimcrack to go and see, here or there, at the houses of collectors to whom Schwalbach recommended him, hours passed with trainers, jockeys, dealers in curiosities, the occupied, varied existence of a bourgeois gentleman in modern Paris. In all this going and coming he succeeded in Parisianizing himself a little more each day, was admitted to Monpavon's club, made welcome in the green-room at the ballet, behind the scenes at the theatre, and continued to preside at his famous bachelor breakfasts, the only entertainments possible in his establishment. His existence was really very full, and yet de Géry relieved him from the most difficult part of it, the complicated department of solicitations and contributions.

The young man was now a witness, as he sat at his desk, of all the audacious and burlesque inventions, all the heroi-comic schemes of that mendicancy of a great city, organized like a ministerial department and in numbers like an army, which subscribes to the newspapers and knows its *Bottin* by heart. It was his business to receive the fair-haired lady, young, brazen-faced and already faded, who asks for only a hundred louis, threatening to throw herself into the water immediately upon leaving the house if they are not forthcoming, and the stout matron, with affable,

unceremonious manners, who says on entering the room: "Monsieur, you do not know me. Nor have I the honor of knowing you; but we shall soon know each other. Be kind enough to sit down and let us talk." The tradesman in difficulties, on the brink of insolvency — it is sometimes true — who comes to entreat you to save his honor, with a pistol all ready for suicide bulging out the pocket of his coat — sometimes it is only the bowl of his pipe. And oftentimes cases of genuine distress, prolix and tiresome, of people who do not even know how to tell how unfitted they are to earn their living. Besides such instances of avowed mendicancy, there were others in disguise: charity, philanthropy, good works, encouragement of artists, house-to-house collections for children's hospitals, parish churches, penitentiaries, benevolent societies or district libraries. And lastly those that array themselves in a worldly mask: tickets to concerts, benefit performances, tickets of all colors, "platform, front row, reserved sections." The Nabob's orders were that no one should be refused, and it was a decided gain that he no longer attended to such matters in person. For a long time he had deluged all this hypocritical scheming with gold, with lordly indifference, paying five hundred francs for a ticket to a concert by some Wurtemberg zither-player, or Languedocian flutist, which would have been quoted at ten francs at the Tuileries or the Duc de Mora's. On some days young de Géry went out from these sessions actually nauseated. All his

youthful honesty rose in revolt; he attempted to induce the Nabob to institute some reforms; but he, at the first word, assumed the bored expression characteristic of weak natures when called upon to give an opinion, or else replied with a shrug of his great shoulders: "Why this is Paris, my dear child. Don't you be alarmed, but just let me alone. I know where I 'm going and what I want."

He wanted two things at that time, — a seat in the Chamber of Deputies and the cross of the Legion of Honor. In his view those were the first two stages of the long ascent which his ambition impelled him to undertake. He certainly would be chosen a deputy through the *Caisse Territoriale*, at the head of which he was. Paganetti from Porto-Vecchio often said to him:

"When the day comes, the island will rise as one man and vote for you."

But electors were not the only thing it was necessary to have; there must be a vacant seat in the Chamber, and the delegation from Corsica was full. One member, however, old Popolasca, being infirm and in no condition to perform his duties, might be willing to resign on certain conditions. It was a delicate matter to negotiate, but quite practicable, for the good man had a large family, estates which produced almost nothing, a ruined palace at Bastia, where his children lived on *polenta*, and an apartment at Paris, in a furnished lodging-house of the eighteenth order. By not haggling over one or two hundred thousand

francs, they might come to terms with that famished legislator who, when sounded by Paganetti, did not say yes or no, being allured by the magnitude of the sum but held back by the vainglory of his office. The affair was in that condition and might be decided any day.

With regard to the Cross, the prospect was even brighter. The Work of Bethlehem had certainly created a great sensation at the Tuileries. Nothing was now wanting but M. de La Perrière's visit and his report, which could not fail to be favorable, to ensure the appearance on the list of March 16th, the date of an imperial anniversary, of the glorious name of Jansoulet. The 16th of March, that is to say, within a month. What would old Hemerlingue say to that signal distinction? — old Hemerlingue, who had had to be content with the Nisham for so long. And the bey, who had been made to believe that Jansoulet was under the ban of Parisian society, and the old mother, down at Saint-Romans, who was always so happy over her son's successes! Was not all that worth a few millions judiciously distributed and strewn by that road leading to renown, along which the Nabob walked like a child, with no fear of being devoured at the end? And was there not in these external joys, these honors, this dearly bought consideration, a measure of compensation for all the chagrins of that Oriental won back to European life, who longed for a home and had naught but a caravansary, who sought a wife and found naught but a Levantine?

VIII.

THE WORK OF BETHLEHEM.

BETHLEHEM! Why did that legendary name, sweet to the ear, warm as the straw in the miraculous stable, give you such a cold shudder when you saw it in gilt letters over that iron gateway? The feeling was due perhaps to the melancholy landscape, the vast, desolate plain that stretches from Nanterre to Saint-Cloud, broken only by an occasional clump of trees or the smoke from some factory chimney. Perhaps, too, in a measure, to the disproportion between the humble hamlet of Judæa and that grandiose structure, that villa in the style of Louis XIII., built of small stones and mortar, and showing pink through the leafless branches of the park, where there were several large ponds with a coating of green slime. Certain it is that on passing the place one's heart contracted. When one entered the grounds it was much worse. An oppressive, inexplicable silence hovered about the house, where the faces at the windows had a depressing aspect behind the small old-fashioned, greenish panes. The she-goats, straying along the paths, languidly cropped the

first shoots of grass, with occasional "baas" in the direction of their keeper, who seemed as bored as they, and followed visitors with a listless eye. There was an air of mourning, the deserted, terrified aspect of a plague-stricken spot. Yet that had once been an attractive, cheerful property, and there had been much feasting and revelry there not long before. It had been laid out for the famous singer who had sold it to Jenkins, and it exhibited traces of the imaginative genius peculiar to the operatic stage, in the bridge across the pond, where there was a sunken wherry filled with water-soaked leaves, and in its summer-house, all of rockwork, covered with climbing ivy. It had seen some droll sights, had that summer-house, in the singer's time, and now it saw some sad ones, for the infirmary was located there.

To tell the truth, the whole establishment was simply one huge infirmary. The children fell sick as soon as they arrived, languished and finally died unless their parents speedily removed them to the safe shelter of their homes. The curé of Nanterre went so often to Bethlehem with his black vestments and his silver crucifix, the undertaker had so many orders for coffins for the house, that it was talked about in the neighborhood, and indignant mothers shook their fists at the model nursery, but only at a safe distance if they happened to have in their arms a little pink and white morsel of humanity to shelter from all the contagions of that spot. That was what gave the miserable place such a heart-rending look. A house where chil-

dren die cannot be cheerful: it is impossible for the trees to bloom there, or the birds to nest, or the water to flow in laughing ripples of foam.

The institution seemed to be fairly inaugurated. Jenkins' idea, excellent in theory, was extremely difficult, almost impracticable, in practice. And yet God knows that the affair had been carried through with an excess of zeal as to every detail, even the most trifling, and that all the money and attendants necessary were forthcoming. At the head of the establishment was one of the most skilful men in the profession, M. Pondevèz, a graduate of the Paris hospitals; and associated with him, to take more direct charge of the children, a trustworthy woman, Madame Polge. Then there were maids and seamstresses and nurses. And how perfectly everything was arranged and systematized, from the distribution of the water through fifty faucets, to the omnibus with its driver in the Bethlehem livery, going to the station at Rueil to meet every train, with a great jingling of bells. And the magnificent goats, goats from Thibet, with long silky coats and bursting udders. Everything was beyond praise in the organization of the establishment; but there was one point at which everything went to pieces. This artificial nursing, so belauded in the prospectus, did not agree with the children. It was a strange obstinacy, as if they conspired together with a glance, the poor little creatures, for they were too young to speak — most of them were destined never to speak — "If you say so, we won't suck the goats." And they did

not, they preferred to die one after another rather than to suck them. Was Jesus of Bethlehem nursed by a goat in his stable? Did he not, on the contrary, nestle against a woman's breast, soft and full, on which he fell asleep when his thirst was satisfied? Who ever saw a goat among the legendary oxen and asses on that night when the beasts spoke? In that case, why lie, why call it Bethlehem?

The manager was touched at first by so many deaths. This Pondevèz, a waif and estray of the life of the Quarter, a twentieth year student well known in all the fruit-shops of Boulevard Saint-Michel under the name of Pompon, was not a bad man. When he realized the failure of artificial nursing, he simply hired four or five buxom nurses in the neighborhood, and nothing more was needed to revive the children's appetites. That humane impulse was near costing him his place.

"Nurses at Bethlehem," said Jenkins in a rage, when he came to pay his weekly visit. "Are you mad? Upon my word! why the goats then, and the lawns to feed them, and my idea, and the pamphlets about my idea? What becomes of all these? Why, you're going against my system, you're stealing the founder's money."

"But, my dear master," the student tried to reply, passing his hands through his long red beard, "but — as they don't like that food —"

"Very well! let them go hungry, but let the principle of artificial nursing be respected. Everything depends on that. I don't wish to have to

tell you so again. Send away those horrible nurses. For bringing up our children we have goat's milk and cow's milk in a great emergency; but I can't concede anything beyond that."

He added, with his apostolic air:

"We are here to demonstrate a grand philanthropic idea. It must triumph, even at the cost of some sacrifices. Look to it."

Pondevèz did not insist. After all, it was a good place, near enough to Paris to permit descents upon Nanterre from the Quarter on Sunday, or a visit by the manager to his favorite breweries. Madame Polge—whom Jenkins always called "our intelligent overseer," and whom he had in fact placed there to oversee everything, the manager first of all — was not so austere as her duties would lead one to believe, and readily yielded to the charm of a *petit verre* or two of "right cognac," or to a game of bezique for fifteen hundred points. So he dismissed the nurses and tried to harden himself against whatever might happen. What did happen? A genuine Massacre of the Innocents. So that the few parents who were possessed of any means at all, mechanics or tradesmen of the faubourgs, who had been tempted by the advertisements to part with their children, speedily took them away, and there remained in the establishment only the wretched little creatures picked up under porches or in the fields, or sent by the hospitals, and doomed from their birth to all manner of ills. As the mortality constantly increased, even that source of supply failed, and the

omnibus that had departed at full speed for the railway station returned as light and springy as an empty hearse. How could that state of affairs last? How long would it take to kill off the twenty-five or thirty little ones who were left? That is what the manager, or, as he had christened himself, the register of deaths, Pondevèz, was wondering one morning after breakfast, as he sat opposite Madame Polge's venerable curls, taking a hand at that lady's favorite game.

"Yes, my dear Madame Polge, what is to become of us? Things cannot go on long like this. Jenkins won't give in, the children are as obstinate as mules. There 's no gainsaying it, they 'll all pass out of our hands. There 's that little Wallachian — I mark the king, Madame Polge — who may die any minute. Poor little brat, just think, it 's three days since anything went into his stomach. I don't care what Jenkins says; you can't improve children, like snails, by starving them. It 's a distressing thing not to be able to save a single one. The infirmary has n't unlimited capacity. In all earnestness this is a pitiful business. Bezique, forty."

Two strokes of the bell at the main entrance interrupted his monologue. The omnibus was returning from the station and its wheels ground into the gravel in unaccustomed fashion.

"What an astonishing thing!" said Pondevèz, "the carriage is n't empty."

In truth the vehicle drew up at the steps with a certain pride, and the man who alighted crossed

the threshold at a bound. It was an express from Jenkins with important news; the doctor would be there in two hours to inspect the asylum, with the Nabob and a gentleman from the Tuileries. He gave strict injunctions that everything should be ready for their reception. The plan was formed so suddenly that he had not had time to write; but he relied on M. Pondevèz to make the necessary arrangements.

"Deuce take him and his necessary arrangements!" muttered Pondevèz in dismay. It was a critical situation. That momentous visit came at the worst possible moment, when the system was rapidly going to pieces. Poor Pompon, in dire perplexity, tugged at his beard and gnawed the ends of it.

"Come, come," he said abruptly to Madame Polge, whose long face had grown still longer between her false curls. "There is only one thing for us to do. We must clear out the infirmary, carry all the sick ones into the dormitory. They 'll be no better nor worse for spending half a day there. As for the scrofulous ones, we 'll just put them out of sight. They 're too ugly, we won't show them. Come, off we go! all hands on deck!"

The dinner-bell rang the alarm and everybody hurried to the spot. Seamstresses, nurses, maid-servants, came running from every side, jostling one another in the corridors, hurrying across the yards. Orders flew hither and thither, and there was a great calling and shouting; but above

all the other noises soared the noise of a grand scrubbing, of rushing water, as if Bethlehem had been surprised by a conflagration. And the wailing of sick children torn from their warm beds, all the whimpering little bundles carried through the damp park, with a fluttering of bedclothes among the branches, strengthened the impression of a fire. In two hours, thanks to the prodigious activity displayed, the whole house from top to bottom was ready for the impending visit, all the members of the staff at their posts, the fire lighted in the stove, the goats scattered picturesquely through the park. Madame Polge had put on her green dress, the manager's attire was a little less slovenly than usual, but so simple as to exclude any idea of premeditation. Let the Empress's secretary come!

And here he is.

He alights with Jenkins and Jansoulet from a magnificent carriage with the Nabob's red and gold livery. Feigning the utmost astonishment, Pondevèz rushes forward to meet his visitors.

"Ah! Monsieur Jenkins, what an honor! What a surprise!"

Salutations are exchanged on the stoop, reverences, handshakings, introductions. Jenkins, his coat thrown back from his loyal breast, indulges in his heartiest, most engaging smile; but a meaning furrow lies across his brow. He is anxious concerning the surprises that the establishment may have in store, for he knows its demoralized condition. If only Pondevèz has taken proper precau-

tions! It begins well, however. The somewhat theatrical aspect of the approach to the house, the white fleeces gambolling among the shrubbery, have enchanted M. de La Perrière, who, with his innocent eyes, his straggling white beard and the constant nodding of his head, is not himself unlike a goat escaped from its tether.

"First of all, messieurs, the most important room in the house, the Nursery," says the manager, opening a massive door at the end of the reception-room. The gentlemen follow him, descend a few steps and find themselves in an enormous basement room, with tiled floor, formerly the kitchen of the château. The thing that impresses one on entering is a huge, high fireplace of the old pattern, in red brick, with two stone benches facing each other under the mantel, and the singer's crest — an immense lyre with a roll of music — carved on the monumental pediment. The effect was striking; but there came from it a terrible blast of air, which, added to the cold of the floor, to the pale light falling through the windows on a level with the ground, made one shudder for the well-being of the children. What would you have? They were obliged to use that unhealthy apartment for the Nursery because of the capricious, country-bred nurses who were accustomed to the unconstrained manners of the stable; one had only to see the pools of milk, the great reddish spots drying on the floor, to inhale the acrid odor that assailed your nostrils as you entered, mingled with whey and moist hair

and many other things, to be convinced of that absolute necessity.

The dark walls of the room were so high that at first the visitors thought that the Nursery was deserted. They distinguished, however, at the farther end, a bleating, whining, restless group. Two countrywomen, with surly, brutish, dirty faces, two "dry-nurses," who well deserved their name, were sitting on mats with their nurslings in their arms, each having a large goat before her, with legs apart and distended udders. The manager seemed to be agreeably surprised:

"On my word, messieurs, this is a lucky chance. Two of our children are having a little lunch. We will see how nurses and nurslings agree."

"What's the matter with the man? He is mad," said Jenkins to himself, in dire dismay.

But the manager was very clear-headed, on the contrary, and had himself shrewdly arranged the scene, selecting two patient, good-natured beasts, and two exceptional subjects, two little idiots who were determined to live at any price, and opened their mouths to nourishment of any sort, like little birds still in the nest.

"Come, messieurs, and see for yourselves."

The cherubs were really nursing. One of them, cuddled under the goat's belly, went at it so heartily that you could hear the *glou-glou* of the warm milk as it went down, down into his little legs, which quivered with satisfaction. The other, more calm, lay indolently in his Auvergnat nurse's lap, and required some little encouragement from her.

"Come, suck, I tell you, suck, *bougri!*"

At last, as if he had formed a sudden resolution, he began to drink so greedily that the woman, surprised by his abnormal appetite, leaned over him and exclaimed, with a laugh:

"Ah! the scamp, what a mischievous trick! it's his thumb he's sucking instead of the goat."

He had thought of that expedient, the angel, to induce them to leave him in peace. The incident produced no ill effect; on the contrary, M. de La Perrière was much amused at the nurse's idea that the child had tried to play a trick on them. He left the Nursery highly delighted. "Positively de-de-delighted," he repeated as they ascended the grand echoing staircase, decorated with stags' antlers, which led to the dormitory.

Very light and airy was that great room, occupying the whole of one side of the house, with numerous windows, cradles at equal intervals, with curtains as white and fleecy as clouds. Women were passing to and fro in the broad passage-way in the centre, with piles of linen in their arms, keys in their hands, overseers or "movers." Here they had tried to do too much, and the first impression of the visitors was unfavorable. All that white muslin, that waxed floor, in which the light shone without blending, the clean window-panes reflecting the sky, which wore a gloomy look at sight of such things, brought out more distinctly the thinness, the sickly pallor of those little shroud-colored, moribund creatures. Alas! the oldest were but

six months, the youngest barely a fortnight, and already, upon all those faces, those embryotic faces, there was an expression of disgust, an old-ish, dogged look, a precocity born of suffering, visible in the numberless wrinkles on those little bald heads, confined in linen caps edged with tawdry hospital lace. From what did they suffer? What disease had they? They had everything, everything that one can have; diseases of children and diseases of adults. Offspring of poverty and vice, they brought into the world when they were born ghastly phenomena of heredity. One had a cleft palate, another great copper-colored blotches on his forehead, and all were covered with humor. And then they were starving to death. Notwithstanding the spoonfuls of milk and sugared water that were forced into their mouths, and the sucking-bottle that was used more or less in spite of the prohibition, they were dying of inanition. Those poor creatures, exhausted before they were born, needed the freshest, the most strengthening food; the goats might perhaps have supplied it, but they had sworn not to suck the goats. And that was what made the dormitory lugubrious and silent, without any of the little outbursts of anger emphasized by clenched fists, without any of the shrieks that show the even red gums, whereby the child makes trial of his strength and of his lungs; only an occasional plaintive groan, as if the soul were tossing and turning restlessly in a little diseased body, unable to find a place to rest.

Jenkins and the manager, noticing the unfavor-

able impression produced upon their guests by the visit to the dormitory, tried to enliven the situation by talking very loud, with a good-humored, frank, well-satisfied manner. Jenkins shook hands warmly with the overseer.

"Well, Madame Polge, are our little pupils getting on?"

"As you see, Monsieur le Docteur," she replied, pointing to the beds.

Very funereal in her green dress was tall Madame Polge, the ideal of dry nurses; she completed the picture.

But where had the Empress's secretary gone? He was standing by a cradle, which he was scrutinizing sadly, shaking his head.

"*Bigre de Bigre!*" whispered Pompon to Madame Polge. "It's the Wallachian."

The little blue card, hanging above the cradle as in hospitals, set forth the nationality of the child within: "Moldo-Wallachian." What cursed luck that Monsieur le Secrétaire's eye should happen to light upon him! Oh! the poor little head lying on the pillow, with cap all awry, nostrils contracted, lips parted by a short, panting breath, the breath of those who are just born and of those who are about to die.

"Is he ill?" the secretary softly asked the manager, who had drawn near.

"Not in the least," replied the audacious Pompon, and he walked to the cradle, poked the little one playfully with his finger, rearranged the pillow, and said in a hearty, affectionate voice, albeit

a little roughly: "Well, old fellow?" Roused from his stupor, emerging from the torpor which already enveloped him, the little fellow opened his eyes and looked at the faces bending over him, with sullen indifference, then, returning to his dream which he deemed more attractive, clenched his little wrinkled hands and heaved an inaudible sigh. Oh! mystery! Who can say for what purpose that child was born? To suffer two months and to go away without seeing or understanding anything, before anyone had heard the sound of his voice!

"How pale he is!" muttered M. de La Perrière, himself as pale as death. The Nabob, too, was as white as a sheet. A cold breath had passed over them. The manager assumed an indifferent air.

"It's the reflection. We all look green."

"To be sure — to be sure," said Jenkins, "it's the reflection of the pond. Just come and look, Monsieur le Secrétaire." And he led him to the window to point out the great sheet of water in which the willows dipped their branches, while Madame Polge hastily closed the curtains of his cradle upon the little Wallachian's never-ending dream.

They must proceed quickly to inspect other portions of the establishment in order to do away with that unfortunate impression.

First they show M. de La Perrière the magnificent laundry, with presses, drying machines, thermometers, huge closets of polished walnut full of caps and nightgowns, tied together and labelled by

dozens. When the linen was well warmed the laundress passed it out through a little wicket in exchange for the number passed in by the nurse. As you see, the system was perfect, and everything, even to the strong smell of lye, combined to give the room a healthy, country-like aspect. There were garments enough there to clothe five hundred children. That was the capacity of Bethlehem, and everything was provided on that basis: the vast dispensary, gleaming with glass jars and Latin inscriptions, with marble pestles in every corner; the hydropathic arrangements with the great stone tanks, the shining tubs, the immense apparatus traversed by pipes of all lengths for the ascending and descending *douches*, in showers, in jets, and in whip-like streams; and the kitchens fitted out with superb graduated copper kettles, with economical coal and gas ovens. Jenkins had determined to make it a model establishment; and it was an easy matter for him, for he had worked on a grand scale, as one works when funds are abundant. One could feel everywhere, too, the experience and the iron hand of "our intelligent overseer," to whom the manager could not forbear to do public homage. That was the signal for general congratulations. M. de La Perrière, delighted with the equipment of the establishment, congratulated Dr. Jenkins upon his noble creation, Jenkins congratulated his friend Pondevèz, who in his turn thanked the secretary for having condescended to honor Bethlehem with a visit. The good Nabob chimed in with that con-

cert of laudation and had a pleasant word for every one, but was somewhat astonished all the same that no one congratulated him too, while they were about it. To be sure, the best of all congratulations awaited him on the 16th of March at the head of the *Journal Officiel*, in a decree which gleamed before his eyes in anticipation and made him squint in the direction of his buttonhole.

These pleasant words were exchanged as they walked through a long corridor where their sententious phrases were repeated by the echoes; but suddenly a horrible uproar arrested their conversation and their footsteps. It was like the miaouwing of frantic cats, the bellowing of wild bulls, the howling of savages dancing the war-dance — a frightful tempest of human yells, repeated and increased in volume and prolonged by the high, resonant arches. It rose and fell, stopped suddenly, then began again with extraordinary intensity. The manager was disturbed, and started to make inquiries. Jenkins' eyes were inflamed with rage.

"Let us go on," said the manager, really alarmed this time; "I know what it is."

He did know what it was; but M. de La Perrière proposed to know, too, and before Pondevèz could raise his hand, he pushed open the heavy door of the room whence that fearful concert proceeded.

In a vile kennel which the grand scouring had passed by, for they had no idea of exhibiting it, some half score little monstrosities lay stretched on mattresses laid side by side on the floor, under

the guardianship of a chair unoccupied save by an unfinished piece of knitting, and a little cracked kettle full of hot wine boiling over a smoking wood fire. They were the leprous, the scrofulous, the outcasts of Bethlehem who had been hidden away in that retired corner — with injunctions to their dry nurse to amuse them, to pacify them, to beat them if necessary, so that they should not cry — but whom that stupid, inquisitive country-woman had left to themselves while she went to look at the fine carriage standing in the court-yard. When her back was turned the urchins soon wearied of their horizontal position; and all the little, red-faced, blotched *crûte-levés* lifted up their robust voices in concert, for they, by some miracle, were in good health, their very disease saved and nourished them. As wild and squirming as cockchafers thrown on their backs, struggling to rise with the aid of knees and elbows, — some unable to recover their equilibrium after falling on their sides, others sitting erect, bewildered, their little legs wrapped in swaddling-clothes, they spontaneously ceased their writhings and their cries when they saw the door open; but M. de La Perrière's shaking beard reassured them, encouraged them to fresh efforts, and in the renewed uproar the manager's explanation was almost inaudible: "Children that are kept secluded — contagion — skin diseases." Monsieur le Secrétaire inquired no farther; less heroic than Bonaparte when he visited the plague-stricken wretches at Jaffa, he rushed to the door, and in

his confusion and alarm, anxious to say something and unable to think of anything appropriate, he murmured, with an ineffable smile: "They are cha-arming."

The inspection concluded, they all assembled in the salon on the ground floor, where Madame Polge had prepared a little collation. The cellars of Bethlehem were well stocked. The sharp air of the high land, the going upstairs and downstairs had given the old gentleman from the Tuileries such an appetite as he had not had for many a day, so that he talked and laughed with true rustic good-fellowship, and when they were all standing, the visitors being about to depart, he raised his glass, shaking his head the while, to drink this toast: "To Be-Be-Bethlehem!"

The others were much affected, there was a clinking of glasses, and then the carriage bore the party swiftly along the avenue of lindens, where a cold, red, rayless sun was setting. Behind them the park relapsed into its gloomy silence. Great dark shadows gathered at the foot of the hedges, invaded the house, crept stealthily along the paths and across their intersections. Soon everything was in darkness save the ironical letters over the entrance gate, and, at a window on the ground-floor, a flickering red glimmer, the flame of a taper burning by the pillow of the dead child.

"*By decree of March* 12, 1865, *promulgated at the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior, Monsieur le Docteur Jenkins, founder and president of the Work*

of Bethlehem, is appointed chevalier of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honor. Exemplary devotion to the cause of humanity."

When he read these lines on the first page of the *Journal Officiel*, on the morning of the 16th, the poor Nabob had an attack of vertigo.

Was it possible?

Jenkins decorated and not he!

He read the announcement twice, thinking that his eyes must have deceived him. There was a buzzing in his ears. The letters, two of each, danced before his eyes with the red circles caused by looking at the sun. He had been so certain of seeing his name in that place; and Jenkins — only the day before — had said to him so confidently: "It is all settled!" that it still seemed to him that he must be mistaken. But no, it was really Jenkins. It was a deep, heart-sickening, prophetic blow, like a first warning from destiny, and was the more keenly felt because, for years past, the man had been unaccustomed to disappointments, had lived above humanity. All the good that there was in him learned at that moment to be distrustful.

"Well," he said to de Géry, entering his room, as he did every morning, and surprising him with the paper in his hand and evidently deeply moved, "I suppose you have seen, — my name is not in the *Officiel?*"

He tried to smile, his features distorted like those of a child struggling to restrain his tears. Then, suddenly, with the frankness that was so

attractive in him, he added: "This makes me feel very badly, — I expected too much."

As he spoke, the door opened and Jenkins rushed into the room, breathless, panting, intensely agitated.

"It 's an outrage — a horrible outrage. It cannot, shall not be."

The words rushed tumultuously to his lips, all trying to come out at once; then he seemed to abandon the attempt to express his thoughts and threw upon the table a little shagreen box and a large envelope, both bearing the stamp of the chancellor's office.

"There are my cross and my letters patent," he said. "They are yours, my friend, I cannot keep them."

In reality that did not mean much. Jansoulet arraying himself in Jenkins' ribbon would speedily be punished for unlawfully wearing a decoration. But a *coup de théâtre* is not necessarily logical; this particular one led to an effusion of sentiment, embraces, a generous combat between the two men, the result being that Jenkins restored the objects to his pocket, talking about protests, letters to the newspapers. The Nabob was obliged to stop him again.

"Do nothing of the kind, you rascal. In the first place, it would stand in my way another time. Who knows? perhaps on the 15th of next August — "

"Oh! I never thought of that," cried Jenkins, jumping at the idea. He put forth his arm, as in

David's *Serment:* "I swear it by my sacred honor!"

The subject dropped there. At breakfast the Nabob did not refer to it and was as cheerful as usual. His good humor lasted through the day; and de Géry, to whom that scene had been a revelation of the real Jenkins, an explanation of the satirical remarks and restrained wrath of Felicia Ruys when she spoke of the doctor, asked himself to no purpose how he could open his dear master's eyes concerning that scheming hypocrite. He should have known, however, that the men of the South, all effusiveness on the surface, are never so utterly blind, so deluded as to resist the wise results of reflection. That evening the Nabob opened a shabby little portfolio, badly worn at the corners, in which for ten years past he had manœuvred his millions, minuting his profits and his expenses in hieroglyphics comprehensible to himself alone. He calculated for a moment, then turned to de Géry.

"Do you know what I am doing, my dear Paul?" he asked.

"No, monsieur."

"I have just been reckoning" — and his mocking glance, eloquent of his Southern origin, belied his good-humored smile — "I have just been reckoning that I have spent four hundred and thirty thousand francs to obtain that decoration for Jenkins."

Four hundred and thirty thousand francs! And the end was not yet.

IX.

GRANDMAMMA.

THREE times a week, in the evening, Paul de Géry appeared to take his lesson in bookkeeping in the Joyeuse dining-room, not far from the small salon where the little family had burst upon him at his first visit; so that, while he was being initiated into all the mysteries of "debit and credit," with his eyes fixed on his white-cravated instructor, he listened in spite of himself to the faint sounds of the toilsome evening on the other side of the door, longing for the vision of all those pretty heads bending over around the lamp. M. Joyeuse never mentioned his daughters. As jealous of their charms as a dragon standing guard over lovely princesses in a tower, aroused to vigilance by the fanciful imaginings of his doting affection, he replied dryly enough to his pupil's questions concerning "the young ladies," so that the young man ceased to mention them to him. He was surprised, however, that he never happened to see this "Grandmamma" whose name recurred constantly in M. Joyeuse's conversation upon every subject, in the most trivial details of his existence, hovering

over the house like the symbol of its perfect orderliness and tranquillity.

Such extreme reserve, on the part of a venerable lady, who in all probability had passed the age at which the adventurous spirit of a young man is to be feared, seemed to him exaggerated. But the lessons were very practical, given in very clear language, and the professor had an excellent method of demonstration, marred by a single fault, a habit of relapsing into fits of silence, broken by starts and interjections that went off like bombs. Outside of that he was the best of masters, intelligent, patient and faithful. Paul learned to find his way through the complicated labyrinth of books of account and resigned himself to the necessity of asking nothing further.

One evening, about nine o'clock, as the young man rose to go, M. Joyeuse asked him if he would do him the honor to take a cup of tea *en famille*, a custom of the time of Madame Joyeuse, born Saint-Amand, who used to receive her friends on Thursdays. Since her death, and the change in their financial position, their friends had scattered; but they had retained that little "weekly extra." Paul having accepted, the good man opened the door and called:

"Grandmamma."

A light step in the hall and a face of twenty years, surrounded by a nimbus of abundant, fluffy brown hair, abruptly made its appearance. De Géry looked at M. Joyeuse with an air of stupefaction:

"Grandmamma?"

"De Gery looked at M. Joyeuse with an air of stupefaction."

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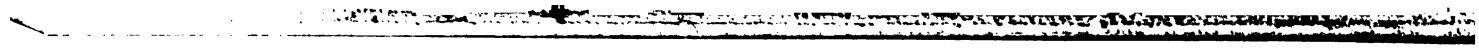


"Yes, it 's a name we gave her when she was a little girl. With her frilled cap, and her authoritative older-sister expression, she had a funny little face, so wise-looking. We thought that she looked like her grandmother. The name has clung to her."

From the worthy man's tone, it was evident that to him it was the most natural thing in the world, that grandmotherly title bestowed upon such attractive youth. Every one in the household thought as he did, and the other Joyeuse girls, who ran to their father and grouped themselves about him somewhat as in the show-case on the ground-floor, and the old servant, who brought and placed upon the table in the salon, whither they had adjourned, a magnificent tea-service, a relic of the former splendor of the establishment, all called the girl "Grandmamma," nor did she once seem to be annoyed by it, for the influence of that blessed name imparted to the affection of them all a touch of deference that flattered her and gave to her imaginary authority a singular attractiveness, as of a protecting hand.

It may have been because of that title, which he had learned to cherish in his infancy, but de Géry found an indescribable fascination in the girl. It did not resemble the sudden blow he had received from another, full in the heart, the perturbation mingled with a longing to fly, to escape an obsession, and the persistent melancholy peculiar to the day after a fête, extinguished candles, refrains that have died away, perfumes vanished in the darkness.

No, in the presence of that young girl, as she stood looking over the family table, making sure that nothing was lacking, letting her loving, sparkling eyes rest upon her children, her little children, he was assailed by a temptation to know her, to be to her as an old friend, to confide to her things that he confessed to none but himself; and when she offered him his cup, with no worldly airs, no society affectations, he would have liked to say like the others a "Thanks, Grandmamma," in which he might put his whole heart.

Suddenly a cheery, vigorous knock made everybody jump.

"Ah! there's Monsieur André. Quick, Élise, a cup. Yaia, the little cakes." Meanwhile, Mademoiselle Henriette, the third of the Joyeuse girls, — who had inherited from her mother, born Saint-Amand, a certain worldly side, — in view of the crowded condition of the salons that evening, rushed to light the two candles on the piano.

"My fifth act is done," cried the newcomer, as he entered the room; then he stopped short. "Ah! excuse me," and his face took on a discomfited expression at sight of the stranger. M. Joyeuse introduced them to each other: "Monsieur Paul de Géry — Monsieur André Maranne," — not without a certain solemnity of manner. He remembered his wife's receptions long ago; and the vases on the mantel, the two great lamps, the work-table, the armchairs arranged in a circle, seemed to share the illusion, to shine brighter as if rejuvenated by that unusual throng.

"So your play is finished?"

"Finished, Monsieur Joyeuse, and I mean to read it to you one of these days."

"Oh! yes, Monsieur André. Oh! yes," said all the girls in chorus.

Their neighbor wrote for the stage and no one of them entertained a doubt of his success. Photography held out less promise of profit, you know. Customers were very rare, the passers-by disinclined to patronize him. To keep his hand in and get his new apparatus into working order, Monsieur André was taking his friends again every Sunday, the family lending themselves for his experiments with unequalled good-humor, for the prosperity of that inchoate, suburban industry was a matter of pride to them all, arousing, even in the girls, that touching sentiment of fraternity which presses the humblest destinies together as closely as sparrows on the edge of a roof. But André Maranne, with the inexhaustible resources of his high forehead, stored with illusions, explained without bitterness the indifference of the public. Either the weather was unfavorable or else every one complained of the wretched condition of business, and he ended always with the same consoling refrain: "Wait until *Révolte* has been acted!" *Révolte* was the title of his play.

"It's a surprising thing," said the fourth of the Joyeuse girls, a child of twelve with her hair in a pigtail, "it's a surprising thing that you do so little business with such a splendid balcony!"

"And then there's a great deal of passing

through the quarter," added Élise confidently. Grandmamma smilingly reminded her that there was even more on Boulevard des Italiens.

"Ah! if it were Boulevard des Italiens —" said M. Joyeuse dreamily, and away he went on his chimera, which was suddenly brought to a standstill by a gesture and these words, uttered in a piteous tone: "closed because of failure." In an instant the terrible *Imaginaire* had installed his friend in a splendid apartment on the boulevard, where he earned an enormous amount of money, increasing his expenses at the same time so disproportionately, that a loud "*pouf*" swallowed up photographer and photography in a few months. They laughed heartily when he gave that explanation; but they all agreed that Rue Saint-Ferdinand, although less showy, was much more reliable than Boulevard des Italiens. Moreover, it was very near the Bois de Boulogne, and if the fashionable world should once begin to pass that way — That fashionable society which her mother so affected was Mademoiselle Henriette's fixed idea; and she was amazed that the thought of receiving *high-life* in his little fifth-floor studio, about as large as a diving-bell, should make their neighbor laugh. Why, only a week or two before, a carriage came there with servants in livery. Sometimes, too, he had had a "very swell" visitor.

"Oh! a real great lady," Grandmamma chimed in. "We were at the window waiting for father. We saw her leave the carriage and look at the frame; we thought surely she came to see you."

"She did come to see me," said André, a little embarrassed.

"For a moment we were afraid she would go on as so many others do, on account of your five flights. So we all four did our best to stop her, to magnetize her with our four pairs of wide-open eyes. We pulled her very gently by the feathers in her hat and the lace on her cape. 'Come upstairs, pray, madame, pray come upstairs,' and finally she came. There is so much magnetism in eyes that want a thing very much!"

Surely she had magnetism enough, the dear creature, not only in her eyes, which were of uncertain hue, veiled or laughing like the sky of her Paris, but in her voice, in the folds of her dress, in everything, even to the long curl that shaded her straight, graceful statue-like neck and attracted you by its tapering shaded point, deftly curled over a supple finger.

The tea being duly served, while the gentlemen continued their talking and drinking — Père Joyeuse was always very slow in everything that he did, because of his abrupt excursions into the moon — the girls resumed their work, the table was covered with wicker baskets, embroidery, pretty wools whose brilliant coloring brightened the faded flowers in the old carpet, and the group of the other evening was formed anew in the luminous circle of the lamp shade, to the great satisfaction of Paul de Géry. It was the first evening of that sort he had passed in Paris; it reminded him of other far-away evenings, cradled by the

same innocent mirth, the pleasant sound of scissors laid upon the table, of the needle piercing the cotton, or the rustling of the leaves of a book as they are turned, and dear faces, vanished forever, clustered in the same way around the family lamp, alas! so suddenly extinguished.

Once admitted into that charming domestic circle, he was not excluded from it again, but took his lessons among the girls, and made bold to talk with them when the good man closed his ledger. There everything tended to give him grateful repose from the seething life in which the Nabob's luxurious worldliness involved him; he bathed in that atmosphere of honesty and simplicity, and strove to cure there the wounds with which a hand more indifferent than cruel was mercilessly riddling his heart.

"Women have hated me, other women have loved me. She who did me the most harm never had either love or hate for me." Paul had fallen in with the woman of whom Heinrich Heine speaks. Felicia was very hospitable and cordial to him. There was no one whom she welcomed more graciously. She reserved for him a special smile, in which there was the pleased expression of an artist's eye resting upon a type which attracts it, and the satisfaction of a *blasé* mind which is amused by anything new, however simple it may seem to be. She liked that reserve, most alluring in a Southerner, the straightforwardness of that judgment, entirely free from artistic or

worldly formulas and enlivened by a touch of local accent. It was a change for her from the zigzag movement of the thumb, drawing flattery in outline with the gestures of a studio fag, from the congratulations of comrades on the way in which she silenced some poor fellow, and from the affected admiration, the "chawming — veay pretty," with which the young dandies honored her as they sucked the handles of their canes. He, at all events, said nothing of that sort to her. She had nicknamed him Minerva, because of his apparent tranquillity and the regularity of his profile; and as soon as he appeared, she would say: "Ah! there's Minerva. Hail, lovely Minerva. Take off your helmet and let us have a talk."

But that familiar, almost fraternal, tone convinced the young man of the hopelessness of his love. He realized that he could not hope to make any further progress in that feminine good-fellowship in which affection was lacking, and that he should lose something every day of his charm as an unfamiliar type in the eyes of that creature who was born bored, and who seemed to have lived her life already and to find the insipidity of repetition in everything that she heard or saw. Felicia was suffering from ennui. Only her art had the power to divert her, to take her out of herself, to transport her to a fairyland of dazzling beauty from which she returned all bruised and sore, always surprised at the awakening, which resembled a fall. She compared herself to the jelly-fish, whose transparent brilliancy in the cool-

ness and constant movement of the waves, vanishes on the shore in little gelatinous pools. During those intervals of idleness, when the absence of thought leaves the hand inert upon the modelling tool, Felicia, deprived of the sole moral nerve of her intellect, became savage, unapproachable, sullen beyond endurance, — the revenge of paltry human qualities upon great tired brains. After she had brought tears to the eyes of all those whom she loved, had striven to evoke painful memories or paralyzing anxieties, and had reached the brutal, murderous climax of her fatigue, — as it was always necessary, where she was concerned, that something ridiculous should be mingled even with the saddest things, she would blow away the remains of her ennui with a cry like that of a dazed wild beast, a sort of yawning roar which she called "the cry of the jackal in the desert," and which would drive the blood from the excellent Crenmitz's cheeks, taking her by surprise in her torpid placidity.

Poor Felicia! Her life was in very truth a ghastly desert when her art did not enliven it with its visions, a dismal, unrelieved desert, where everything was crushed and flattened beneath the same monotonous immensity, the ingenuous love of a boy of twenty and the caprice of an amorous duke, where everything was covered with dry sand blown about by the scorching winds of destiny. Paul was conscious of that void, he tried to escape from it; but something detained him, like a weight which unwinds a chain, and, not-

withstanding the evil things he heard, notwithstanding the strange creature's peculiarities, he hovered about her with a delicious sense of enjoyment, under pain of carrying naught away from that long amorous contemplation save the despair of a believer reduced to the adoration of images.

The place of refuge was in yonder out-of-the-way quarter, where the wind blew so hard without preventing the flame from burning white and straight, — it was in the domestic circle presided over by Grandmamma. Oh! she did not suffer from ennui, she never uttered "the cry of the jackal in the desert." Her life was too well filled: the father to comfort and encourage, the children to teach, all the material cares of a household in which the mother was lacking, the engrossing thoughts which wake with the dawn and which the night puts to sleep, unless it renews them in dreams — one of those instances of indefatigable but apparently effortless devotion, very convenient for poor human selfishness, because it dispenses with all gratitude and hardly makes itself felt, its touch is so light. She was not one of the courageous girls who work to support their parents, give lessons from morning to night and forget the annoyances of the household in the excitement of an engrossing occupation. No, she had formed a different conception of her duty, she was a sedentary bee confining her labors to the hive, with no buzzing around outside in the fresh air and among the flowers. A thousand and

one functions to perform: tailor, milliner, mender, keeper of accounts as well, — for M. Joyeuse, being incapable of any sort of responsibility, left the disposition of the family funds absolutely in her hands, — teacher and music mistress.

As is often the case in families which were originally in comfortable circumstances, Aline, being the eldest, had been educated in one of the best boarding-schools in Paris. Élise had remained there two years with her; but the two younger ones, having come too late, had been sent to little day-schools in the quarter and had all their studies to complete; and it was no easy matter, for the youngest laughed on every pretext, an exuberant, healthy, youthful laugh, like the warbling of a lark drunken on green wheat, and flew away out of sight of desk and symbols, while Mademoiselle Henriette, always haunted by her ideas of grandeur, her love of "the substantial," was none too eager for study. That young person of fifteen, to whom her father had bequeathed something of his imaginative faculty, was already arranging her life in anticipation, and declared formally that she should marry some one of birth and should never have more than three children: "A boy for the name, and two little girls — so that I can dress them alike."

"Yes, that's right," Grandmamma would say, "you shall dress them alike. Meanwhile, let us see about our participles."

But the most troublesome of all was Élise with her thrice unsuccessful examination in history,

always rejected and preparing herself anew, subject to attacks of profound terror and self-distrust which led her to carry that unfortunate handbook of French history with her wherever she went, and to open it at every instant, in the omnibus, in the street, even at the breakfast table; but, being already a young woman and very pretty, she no longer had the mechanical memory of childhood in which dates and events are incrusted forever. Amid her other preoccupations the lesson would fly away in a moment, despite the pupil's apparent application, her long lashes concealing her eyes, her curls sweeping the page, and her rosy mouth twitching slightly at the corners as she repeated again and again: "Louis le Hutin, 1314–1316. Philippe V, le Long, 1316–1322 — 1322. — Oh! Grandmamma, I am lost. I shall never learn them." Thereupon Grandmamma would take a hand, help her to fix her attention, to store away some of those barbarous dates in the Middle Ages, as sharp-pointed as the helmets of the warriors of those days. And in the intervals of those manifold tasks, of that general and constant superintendence, she found time to make pretty things, to take from her work-basket some piece of knitting or embroidery, which clung to her as steadfastly as young Élise to her history of France. Even when she was talking, her fingers were never unemployed for one moment.

"Do you never rest?" de Géry asked her while she counted in a whisper the stitches of her embroidery, "three, four, five," in order to vary the shades.

"Why, this work is rest," she replied. "You men have no idea how useful needlework is to a woman's mind. It regularizes the thought, fixes with a stitch the passing moment and what it carries with it. And think of the sorrows that are soothed, the anxieties forgotten by the help of this purely physical attention, this constant repetition of the same movement, in which you find — and find very quickly, whether you will or no — that your equilibrium is entirely restored. It does not prevent me from hearing all that is said in my neighborhood, from listening to you even more attentively than I should if I were idle — three, four, five."

Oh! yes, she listened. That was plain from the animation of her face, from the way in which she would suddenly straighten herself up, with her needle in the air and the thread stretched over her raised little finger. Then she would suddenly resume her work, sometimes interjecting a shrewd, thoughtful word, which as a general rule agreed with what friend Paul thought. A similarity in their natures and in their responsibilities and duties brought those two young people together, made them mutually interested each in those things that the other had most at heart. She knew the names of his two brothers, Pierre and Louis, and his plans for their future when they should leave school. Pierre wanted to be a sailor. "Oh! no, not a sailor," said Grandmamma, "it would be much better for him to come to Paris with you." And when he admitted that he was afraid of Paris for them,

she laughed at his fears, called him a provincial, for she was full of affection for the city where she was born, where she had grown chastely to womanhood, and which gave her in return the vivacity, the natural refinement, the sprightly good-humor which make one think that Paris, with its rains, its fogs, its sky which is no sky, is the true fatherland of woman, whose nerves it spares and whose patient and intelligent qualities it develops.

Each day Paul de Géry appreciated Mademoiselle Aline more thoroughly — he was the only one in the house who called her by that name — and, strangely enough, it was Felicia who finally cemented their intimacy. What connection could there be between that artist's daughter, fairly launched in the most exalted spheres, and that bourgeois maiden lost to sight in the depths of a suburb? Connections of childhood and friendship, common memories, the great courtyard of the Belin establishment, where they had played together for three years. Such meetings are very common in Paris. A name mentioned at random in conversation suddenly calls forth the amazed question:

"What! do you know her?"

"Do I know Felicia? Why we sat at adjoining desks in the first class. We had the same garden. Such a dear, lovely, clever girl!"

And, noticing how pleased he was to listen to her, Aline recalled the days, still so near, which already formed part of the past to her, fascinating

and melancholy like all pasts. She was quite alone in life, was little Felicia. On Thursday, when they called out the names in the parlor, there was never any one for her; except now and then an old woman, a nice old woman, if she was a little ridiculous, a former ballet-dancer it was said, whom Felicia called the Fairy. She had pet names like that for everybody of whom she was fond, and she transformed them all in her imagination. They used to see each other during the vacations. Madame Joyeuse, although she refused to send Aline to M. Ruys's studio, invited Felicia for whole days, — very short days, made up of work and music, of joint dreams and unrestrained youthful chatter. "Oh! when she talked to me about her art, with the ardor which she put into everything, how delighted I was to hear her! How many things she enabled me to understand of which I never should have had the slightest idea! Even now, when we go to the Louvre with papa, or to the Exhibition of the first of May, the peculiar emotion that one feels at the sight of a beautiful bit of sculpture or a fine painting, makes me think instantly of Felicia. In my young days she represented art, and it went well with her beauty, her somewhat reckless but so kindly nature, in which I was conscious of something superior to myself, which carried me away to a great height without frightening me. Suddenly we ceased to see each other. I wrote to her — no reply. Then fame came to her, great sorrow and engrossing duties to me. And of all that friendship, and very

deep-rooted it must have been, for I cannot speak of it without — three, four, five — nothing is left but old memories to be poked over like dead ashes."

Leaning over her work, the brave girl hastily counted her stitches, concealing her grief in the fanciful designs of her embroidery, while de Géry, deeply moved to hear the testimony of those pure lips in contradiction of the calumnies of a few disappointed dandies or jealous rivals, felt relieved of a weight and once more proud of his love. The sensation was so sweet to him that he came very often to seek to renew it, not only on lesson evenings, but on other evenings as well, and almost forgot to go and see Felicia for the pleasure of hearing Aline speak of her.

One evening, when he left the Joyeuse apartment, he found waiting for him on the landing M. André, the neighbor, who took his arm feverishly.

"Monsieur de Géry," he said, in a trembling voice, his eyes flashing fire behind their spectacles, the only part of his face one could see at night, "I have an explanation to demand at your hands. Will you come up to my room a moment?"

Between that young man and himself there had been only the usual relations of two frequent visitors at the same house, who are attached by no bond, who seem indeed to be separated by a certain antipathy between their natures and their modes of life. What could there be for them to explain? Sorely puzzled, he followed André.

The sight of the little studio, cold and cheerless

under its glass ceiling, the empty fireplace, the wind blowing as it blows outside, and making the candle flicker, the only light that shone upon that vigil of a penniless recluse, reflected upon scattered sheets all covered with writing, — in a word, that atmosphere of inhabited cells wherein the very soul of the inhabitants exhales, — enabled de Géry to comprehend at once the impassioned André Maranne, his long hair thrown back and flying in the wind, his somewhat eccentric appearance, very excusable when one pays for it with a life of suffering and privations; and his sympathy instantly went out to the courageous youth, whose militant pride he fully divined at a single glance. But the other was too excited to notice this transition. As soon as the door was closed, he said, with the accent of a stage hero addressing the perjured seducer:

"Monsieur de Géry, I am not a Cassandra yet." And, as he observed his interlocutor's unbounded amazement, he added: "Yes, yes, we understand each other. I see perfectly clearly what attracts you to M. Joyeuse's, nor has the warm welcome you receive there escaped me. You are rich, you are of noble birth, no one can hesitate between you and the poor poet who carries on an absurd trade in order to gain time to attain success, which will never come perhaps. But I won't allow my happiness to be stolen from me. We will fight, monsieur, we will fight," he repeated, excited by his rival's unruffled tranquillity. "I have loved Mademoiselle Joyeuse a long while. That

love is the aim, the joy, and the strength of a very hard life, painful in many respects. I have nothing but that in the world, and I should prefer to die rather than to renounce it."

What a strange combination is the human heart! Paul was not in love with the charming Aline. His whole heart belonged to another. He thought of her simply as a friend, the most adorable of friends. And yet the idea that Maranne was thinking of her, that she undoubtedly responded to his lover-like attentions, caused him a thrill of jealous anger, and his tone was very sharp when he asked if Mademoiselle Joyeuse were aware of this feeling of André's and had in any way authorized him to proclaim his rights.

"Yes, monsieur, Mademoiselle Élise knows that I love her, and before your frequent visits — "

"Élise — is it Élise you 're talking about?"

"Why, who should it be, pray? The other two are too young."

He entered thoroughly into the traditions of the family. In his eyes Grandmamma's twenty years, her triumphant charm, were concealed by a respectful *sobriquet* and by her providential qualities.

A very brief explanation having allayed André Maranne's excitement, he offered his apologies to de Géry, invited him to take a seat in the carved wooden armchair in which his customers posed, and their conversation speedily assumed an intimate and confidential character, attributable to the earnest avowal with which it began. Paul confessed that he too was in love, and that his only

purpose in coming so often to M. Joyeuse's was to talk about his beloved with Grandmamma, who had known her long before.

"It 's the same with me," said André. "Grandmamma knows all my secrets; but we have not dared say anything to her father yet. My position is too uncertain. Ah! when *Révolte* has been brought out!"

Thereupon they talked about *Révolte!* the famous drama on which he had been at work day and night for six months, which had kept him warm all through the winter, a very hard winter, whose rigor was tempered, however, by the magic power of composition in the little garret, which it completely transformed. There, in that confined space, all the heroes of his play had appeared to the poet, like familiar sprites falling through the roof or riding on the moonbeams, and with them the high-warp tapestries, the gleaming chandeliers, the vast parks with gateways flooded with light, all the usual magnificence of stage-setting, as well as the glorious uproar of the first performance, the applause being represented by the rain beating on the windows and the signs flapping against the door, while the wind, whistling through the melancholy lumber-yard below with a vague murmur of voices brought from afar and carried far, resembled the murmur from the boxes opening into the lobby, allowing his triumph to circulate amid the chattering and confusion of the audience. It was not simply the renown and the money that that blessed play were to bring to him, but something

far more precious. How carefully, therefore, did he turn the pages of the manuscript contained in five great books in blue covers, such books as the Levantine spread out upon the divan on which she took her siestas, and marked with her managerial pencil.

Paul having drawn near the table in his turn, in order to examine the masterpiece, his eyes were attracted by a portrait of a woman in a handsome frame, which seemed, being so near the artist's work, to have been stationed there to stand guard over it. Élise, of course? Oh! no, André had no right as yet to take his young friend's photograph away from its protecting environment. It was a woman of about forty, fair, with a sweet expression, and dressed in the height of fashion. When he saw the face, de Géry could not restrain an exclamation.

"Do you know her?" said André Maranne.

"Why, yes — Madame Jenkins, the Irish doctor's wife. I took supper with them last winter."

"She is my mother." And the young man added in a lower tone:

"Madame Maranne married Dr. Jenkins for her second husband. You are surprised, are you not, to find me in such destitution when my parents are living in luxury? But, as you know, chance sometimes brings very antipathetic natures together in the same family. My father-in-law and I could not agree. He wanted to make a doctor of me, whereas I had no taste for anything but writing. At last, in order to avoid the constant disputes,

which were a source of pain to my mother, I preferred to leave the house and dig my furrow all alone, without assistance from any one. It was a hard task! money was lacking. All the property is in the hands of that — of M. Jenkins. It was a question of earning my living, and you know what a difficult matter that is for persons like ourselves, well brought up as it is termed. To think that, with all the knowledge included in what it is fashionable to call a thorough education, I could find nothing but this child's play which gave me any hope of being able to earn my bread! Some little savings from my allowance as a young man sufficed to buy my first outfit, and I opened a studio far away, at the very end of Paris, in order not to annoy my parents. Between ourselves, I fancy that I shall never make my fortune in photography. The first weeks especially were very hard. No one came, or if by any chance some poor devil did toil up the stairs, I missed him, I spread him out on my plate in a faint, blurred mixture like a ghost. One day, very early in my experience, there came a wedding party, the bride all in white, the husband with a waistcoat — oh! such a waistcoat! And all the guests in white gloves which they insisted upon having included in the photograph, because of the rarity of the sensation. Really, I thought I should go mad. Those black faces, the great white daubs for the dress, the gloves and the orange flowers, the unfortunate bride in the guise of a Zulu queen, under her wreath which melted into her hair! And all

so overflowing with good-nature, with encouragement for the artist. I tried them at least twenty times, kept them until five o'clock at night. They left me only when it was dark, to go and dine! Fancy that wedding-day passed in a photograph gallery!"

While André thus jocosely narrated the melancholy incidents of his life, Paul recalled Felicia's outburst on the subject of Bohemians, and all that she said to Jenkins concerning their exalted courage, their thirst for privations and trials. He thought also of Aline's passionate fondness for her dear Paris, of which he knew nothing but the unhealthy eccentricities, whereas the great city concealed so much unknown heroism, so many noble illusions in its folds. The sensation he had previously felt in the circle of the Joyeuses' great lamp, he was even more keenly conscious of in that less warm, less peaceful spot, whither art brought its desperate or glorious uncertainty; and it was with a melting heart that he listened while André Maranne talked to him of Élise, of the examination she was so long in passing, of the difficult trade of photography, of all the unforeseen hardships of his life, which would surely come to an end "when *Révolte* should have been brought out," a fascinating smile playing about the poet's lips as they gave utterance to that hope, so often expressed, which he made haste to ridicule himself, as if to deprive others of the right to ridicule it.

X.

MEMOIRS OF A CLERK.—THE SERVANTS.

REALLY the wheel of fortune in Paris revolves in a way to make one's head swim!

To have seen the *Caisse Territoriale* as I have seen it, fireless rooms, never swept, covered with the dust of the desert, notices of protest piled high on the desks, a notice of sale on execution at the door every week, and my ragout diffusing the odor of a poor man's kitchen over it all; and to witness now the rehabilitation of our Society in its newly-furnished salons, where it is my duty to light ministerial fires, in the midst of a busy throng, with whistles, electric bells, piles of gold pieces so high that they topple over — it borders on the miraculous. To convince myself that it is all true, I have to look at myself in the glass, to gaze at my iron-gray coat trimmed with silver, my white cravat, my usher's chain such as I used to wear at the Faculty on council days. And to think that, to effect this transformation, to bring back to our brows the gayety that is the mother of concord, to restore to our paper its value ten times over and to our dear Governor the esteem and confi-

dence of which he was so unjustly deprived, it only needed one man, that supernatural Crœsus whom the hundred voices of fame designate by the name of the Nabob.

Oh! the first time that he came into the offices, with his fine presence, his face, a little wrinkled perhaps but so distinguished, the manners of an habitué of courts, on familiar terms with all the princes of the Orient, in a word with the indescribable touch of self-confidence and grandeur that great fortune gives, I felt my heart swell in my waistcoat with its double row of buttons. They may say all they choose about their equality and fraternity, there are some men who are so much above others, that you feel like falling on your face before them and inventing new formulæ of adoration to compel them to pay some attention to you. Let me hasten to add that I had no need of anything of the sort to attract the attention of the Nabob. When I rose as he passed — deeply moved but dignified: you can always trust Passajon — he looked at me with a smile and said in an undertone to the young man who accompanied him: "What a fine head, like — " then a word that I did not hear, a word ending in *ard*, like leopard. But no, it could not be that, for I am not conscious of having a head like a leopard. Perhaps he said like Jean-Bart, although I do not see the connection. However, he said: "What a fine head, like — " and his condescension made me proud. By the way, all the gentlemen are very kind, very polite to me. It seems that there has

been a discussion in regard to me, whether they should keep me or send me away like our cashier, that crabbed creature who was always talking about sending everybody to the galleys, and whom they requested to go and make his economical shirt-fronts somewhere else. Well done! That will teach him to use vulgar language to people.

When it came to me, the Governor was kind enough to forget my rather hasty words in consideration of my certificates of service at the *Territoriale* and elsewhere; and after the council meeting he said to me with his musical accent: "Passajon, you are to stay on with us." You can imagine whether I was happy, whether I lost myself in expressions of gratitude. Just consider! I should have gone away with my few sous, with no hope of ever earning any more, obliged to go and cultivate my little vineyard at Montbars, a very narrow field for a man who has lived among all the financial aristocracy of Paris and the bold strokes of financiering that make fortunes. Instead of that, here I am established all anew in a superb position, my wardrobe replenished, and my savings, which I actually held in my hand for a whole day, intrusted to the fostering care of the Governor, who has undertaken to make them yield a handsome return. I rather think that he is the man who knows how to do it. And not the slightest occasion for anxiety. All apprehensions vanish before the word that is all the fashion at this moment in all administrative councils, at all meetings of the shareholders, on the Bourse, on

the boulevards, everywhere: "The Nabob is in the thing." That is to say, we are running over with cash, the worst *combinazioni* are in excellent shape.

That man is so rich!

Rich to such a degree that one cannot believe it. Why, he has just loaned fifteen millions off-hand to the Bey of Tunis. Fifteen millions, I say! That was rather a neat trick on Hemerlingue, who tried to make trouble between him and that monarch and to cut the grass from under his feet in those lovely Oriental countries, where it grows tall and thick and golden-colored. It was an old Turk of my acquaintance, Colonel Brahim, one of our council at the *Territoriale*, who arranged the loan. Naturally the bey, who was very short of pocket money, it seems, was greatly touched by the Nabob's zeal to accommodate him, and he sent him by Brahim a letter of acknowledgment in which he told him that on his next trip to Vichy he would pass two days with him at the magnificent Château de Saint-Romans, which the former bey, this one's brother, once honored with a visit. Just think what an honor! To receive a reigning prince! The Hemerlingues are in a frenzy. They had manœuvred so skilfully, the son in Tunis, the father in Paris, to bring the Nabob into disfavor. To be sure, fifteen millions is a large sum of money. But do not say: "Passajon is gulling us." The person who told me the story had in his hands the paper sent by the bey in a green silk envelope stamped with the

royal seal. His only reason for not reading it was that it was written in Arabic; otherwise he would have taken cognizance of it as he does of all the Nabob's correspondence. That person is his valet de chambre, M. Noël, to whom I had the honor to be presented last Friday at a small party of persons in service, which he gave to some of his friends. I insert a description of that festivity in my memoirs, as one of the most interesting things I have seen during my four years' residence in Paris.

I supposed at first, when M. Francis, Monpavon's valet de chambre, mentioned the affair to me, that it was to be one of the little clandestine junkets such as they sometimes have in the attic rooms on our boulevard, with the leavings sent up by Mademoiselle Séraphine and the other cooks in the house, where they drink stolen wine and stuff themselves, sitting on trunks, trembling with fear, by the light of two candles which they put out at the slightest noise in the corridors. Such underhand performances are repugnant to my character. But when I received an invitation on pink paper, written in a very fine hand, as if for a ball given by the people of the house:

M. Noël pri M. —— de se randre à sa soire du 25 couran.

On soupra,[1]

I saw, notwithstanding the defective orthography, that it was a serious, authoritative function; so

[1] M. Noël requests the pleasure of M. ——'s company on the evening of the 25th instant. Supper.

I arrayed myself in my newest frock coat and my finest linen, and betook myself to Place Vendôme, to the address indicated by the invitation.

M. Noël had selected for his party the evening of a first performance at the Opéra, which society attended *en masse*, so that the whole household had the bit in their teeth until midnight, and the entire house at their disposal. Nevertheless, our host had preferred to receive us in his room in the upper part of the house, and I strongly approved his judgment, being therein of the opinion of the good man who said:

> Fi du plaisir
> Que la crainte peut corrompre ! [1]

But talk to me about the attics on Place Vendôme! A thick carpet on the floor, the bed out of sight in an alcove, Algerian curtains with red stripes, a green marble clock, the whole lighted by patent self-regulating lamps. Our dean, M. Chalmette, at Dijon had no better quarters than that. I arrived about nine o'clock with Monpavon's old Francis, and I must confess that my appearance created a sensation, preceded as I was by the fame of my academic past, by my reputation for refined manners and great learning. My fine bearing did the rest, for I must say that I know how to carry myself. M. Noël, very dark skinned, with mutton-chop whiskers, and dressed in a black coat, came forward to meet us.

[1] A fig for the pleasure
Which fear can destroy!

"Welcome, Monsieur Passajon," he said; and taking my cap with silver ornaments, which, as I entered the room, I held in my right hand according to custom, he handed it to an enormous negro in red and gold livery.

"Here, Lakdar, take this — and this," he said, by way of jest, giving him a kick in a certain portion of the back.

There was much laughter at that sally, and we began to converse most amicably. An excellent fellow, that M. Noël, with his Southern accent, his determined bearing, the frankness and simplicity of his manners. He reminded me of the Nabob, minus his master's distinguished mien, however. Indeed, I noticed that evening that such resemblances are of common occurrence in valets de chambre, who, as they live on intimate terms with their masters, by whom they are always a little dazzled, end by adopting their peculiarities and their mannerisms. For instance, M. Francis has a certain habit of drawing himself up and displaying his linen shirtfront, a mania for raising his arms to pull down his cuffs, which is Monpavon to the life. But there is one who does not resemble his master in the least, that is Joe, Dr. Jenkins' coachman. I call him Joe, but at the party everybody called him Jenkins; for in that circle the stable folk among themselves call one another by their employers' names, plain Bois-l'Héry, Monpavon and Jenkins. Is it to debase the superiors, to exalt the servant class? Every country has its customs; nobody but a fool

ought to be astonished by them. To return to Joe Jenkins — how can the doctor, who is such an amiable man, so perfect in every respect, keep in his service that *gin* and *porter*-soaked brute, who sits silent for hours at a time, and then, the instant that the liquor goes to his head, begins to roar and wants to box everybody — witness the scandalous scene that had just taken place when we arrived.

The marquis's little tiger, Tom Bois-l'Héry, as they call him here, undertook to joke with that Irish beast, who — at some Parisian gamin's jest — retorted by a terrible Belfast knock-down blow in the middle of the face.

"Come on, Humpty-Dumpty! Come on, Humpty-Dumpty!" roared the coachman, choking with rage, while they carried his innocent victim into the adjoining room, where the ladies, young and old, were engaged in bandaging his nose. The excitement was soon allayed, thanks to our arrival, thanks also to the judicious words of M. Barreau, a man of mature years, sedate and majestic, of my own type. He is the Nabob's cook, formerly *chef* at the Café Anglais, and M. Cardailhac, manager of the Nouveautés, secured him for his friend. To see him in his black coat and white cravat, with his handsome, full, clean-shaven face, you would take him for one of the great functionaries of the Empire. To be sure, a cook in a house where the table is set for thirty people every morning, in addition to Madame's table, and where everyone is fed on the best and

the extra best, is no ordinary cook-shop artist. He receives a colonel's salary, with board and lodging, and then the perquisites! No one has any idea of what the perquisites amount to in a place like that. So every one addressed him with great respect, with the consideration due to a man of his importance: "Monsieur Barreau" here, "my dear Monsieur Barreau" there. You must not imagine that the servants in a house are all chums and social equals. Nowhere is the hierarchy more strictly observed than among them. For instance, I noticed at M. Noël's party that the coachmen did not fraternize with their grooms, nor the valets de chambre with the footmen and outriders, any more than the steward and butler mingled with the scullions; and when M. Barreau cracked a little joke, no matter what it was, it was a pleasure to see how amused his underlings seemed to be. I have no fault to find with these things. Quite the contrary. As our dean used to say: "A society without a hierarchy is a house without a stairway." But the fact seemed to me worth noting in these memoirs.

The party, I need not say, lacked something of its brilliancy until the return of its fairest ornaments, the ladies who had gone to look after little Tom; ladies' maids with glossy, well-oiled hair, housekeepers in beribboned caps, negresses, governesses, among whom I at once acquired much prestige, thanks to my respectable appearance and the nickname "my uncle" which the youngest of those attractive females were pleased to bestow

upon me. I tell you there was no lack of second-hand finery, silk and lace, even much faded velvet, eight-button gloves cleaned several times and perfumery picked up on Madame's toilet-table; but their faces were happy, their minds given over to gayety, and I had no difficulty in forming a very lively little party in one corner — always perfectly proper, of course — that goes without saying — and entirely befitting a person in my position. But that was the general tone of the occasion. Not until toward the close of the collation did I hear any of the unseemly remarks, any of the scandalous anecdotes that amuse the gentlemen of our council so highly; and it gives me pleasure to state that Bois-l'Héry the coachman, to cite no other instance, is very differently brought up from Bois-l'Héry the master.

M. Noël alone, by his familiar tone and the freedom of his repartees, overstepped the limit. There 's a man who does not scruple to call things by their names. For instance, he said to M. Francis, so loud that he could be heard from one end of the salon to the other: "I say, Francis, your old sharper played still another trick on us last week." And as the other threw out his chest with a dignified air, M. Noël began to laugh. "No offence, old girl. The strong box is full. You 'll never get to the bottom of it." And it was then that he told us about the loan of fifteen millions I mentioned above.

Meanwhile I was surprised to see no signs of preparation for the supper mentioned on the invi-

tacious, and I expressed my anxiety in an undertone to one of my lovely nieces, who replied:

"We are waiting for M. Louis."

"M. Louis?"

"What! Don't you know M. Louis, the Duc de Mora's valet de chambre?"

Thereupon I was enlightened on the subject of that influential personage, whose good offices are sought by prefects, senators, even by ministers, and who evidently makes them pay roundly for them, for, with his salary of twelve hundred francs from the duke, he has saved enough to have an income of twenty-five thousand francs, has his daughters at the boarding-school of the Sacred Heart, his son at Bourdaloue College, and a châlet in Switzerland to which the whole family go for the vacation.

At that juncture the personage in question arrived; but there was nothing in his appearance that would have led me to guess his position, which has not its like in Paris. No majesty in his bearing, a waistcoat buttoned to the chin, a mean, insolent manner, and a fashion of speaking without opening his lips, very unpleasant to those who are listening to him.

He saluted the company with a slight nod, offered a finger to M. Noël, and there we sat, staring at each other, congealed by his grand manners, when a door was thrown open at the end of the room and the supper made its appearance — all kinds of cold meats, pyramids of fruit, bottles of every shape, beneath the glare of two candelabra.

"Now, messieurs, escort the ladies."

In a moment we were in our places, the ladies seated, with the oldest or most important of us men, the others standing, passing dishes, chattering, drinking out of all the glasses, picking a mouthful from every plate. I had M. Francis for my neighbor, and I was obliged to listen to his spiteful remarks against M. Louis, of whom he is jealous because he has such a fine situation in comparison with that he himself holds in his played-out nobleman's household.

"He's a parvenu," he said to me in an undertone. "He owes his fortune to his wife, to Madame Paul."

It seems that this Madame Paul is a housekeeper who has been twenty years in the duke's service, and who understands, as no one else does, how to make a certain pomade for certain infirmities that he has. Mora cannot do without her. Remarking that fact, M. Louis paid his court to the old woman, married her, although he is much younger than she; and, in order not to lose his nurse *aux pommades*, His Excellency took the husband for his valet de chambre. In my heart, notwithstanding what I may have said to M. Francis, I considered that marriage perfectly proper and in conformity with the healthiest morality, as both the mayor and the curé had a hand in it. Moreover, that excellent repast, consisting of choice and very expensive dishes which I did not even know by name, had disposed my mind to indulgence and good humor. But everybody was not in the same

mood, for I heard M. Barreau's baritone voice on the other side of the table, grumbling:

"Why does he meddle? Do I stick my nose into his business? In the first place, it's a matter that concerns Bompain, not him. And what does it amount to? What is it that he finds fault with me for? The butcher sends me five baskets of meat every morning. I use only two and sell the other three. Where's the chef who does n't do that? As if he would n't do better to keep an eye on the big leakage above stairs, instead of coming and spying about my basement. When I think that the first-floor clique has smoked twenty-eight thousand francs' worth of cigars in three months! Twenty-eight thousand francs! Ask Noël if I lie. And on the second floor, in Madame's apartments, there's a fine mess of linen, dresses thrown aside after one wearing, jewels by the handful, and pearls so thick that you crush 'em as you walk. Oh! you just wait a bit, and I'll take a twist on that little fellow."

I understood that he was talking about M. de Géry, the Nabob's young secretary, who often comes to the *Territoriale*, where he does nothing but rummage among the books. Very polite certainly, but a very proud youngster who does not know how to make the most of himself. There was nothing but a chorus of maledictions against him around the table. Even M. Louis delivered himself on that subject, with his high and mighty air:

"Our cook, my dear Monsieur Barreau, has

recently had an experience similar to yours with His Excellency's chief secretary, who presumed to indulge in some observations concerning the household expenses. The cook ran up to the duke's study post-haste, in his professional costume, and said, with his hand on his apron string: 'Your Excellency may choose between Monsieur and me.' The duke did not hesitate. One can find as many secretaries as one wants; whereas the good cooks are all known. There are just four in Paris. I include you, my dear Barreau. We dismissed our chief secretary, giving him a prefecture of the first class as a consolation; but we kept our chief cook."

"Ah! that's the talk," said M. Barreau, who was delighted to hear that anecdote. "That's what it is to be in a great nobleman's service. But parvenus are parvenus, what do you expect?"

"And Jansoulet is nothing more than that," added M. Francis, pulling down his cuffs. "A man who was once a porter at Marseille."

At that M. Noël bristled up.

"I say there, old Francis, you're glad enough to have the porter of La Cannebière pay for your roastings at *bouillotte* all the same. You won't find many parvenus like us, who loan millions to kings, and whom great noblemen like Mora don't blush to receive at their table."

"Oh! in the country," sneered M. Francis, showing his old fangs.

The other rose, red as fire, on the point of losing his temper, but M. Louis made a sign with his

hand that he had something to say, and M. Noël at once sat down, putting his hand to his ear, like the rest of us, in order to lose none of the august words.

"It is true," said the great personage, speaking with the ends of his lips and sipping his wine slowly; "it is true that we received the Nabob at Grandbois some weeks ago. Indeed, a very amusing thing happened there. We have a great many mushrooms in the second park, and His Excellency sometimes amuses himself by picking them. At dinner a great dish of mushrooms was served. There was What-d'ye-call-him — Thingamy — What's-his-name — Marigny, the Minister of the Interior, Monpavon, and your master, my dear Noël. The mushrooms made the round of the table, — they looked very inviting, and the gentlemen filled their plates, all except Monsieur le Duc, who can't digest them and thought that politeness required him to say to his guests: 'Oh! it is n't that I am afraid of them, you know. They are all right, — I picked them with my own hand.'

"'*Sapristi!*' said Monpavon, laughingly, 'in that case, my dear Auguste, excuse me if I don't taste them.' Marigny, being less at home, looked askance at his plate.

"'Why, Monpavon, upon my word, these mushrooms look very healthy. I am really sorry that I am no longer hungry.'

"The duke remained perfectly serious.

"'Come, Monsieur Jansoulet, I trust that you won't insult me as they have done. Mush-rooms selected by myself!'

"'Oh! your Excellency, the idea! Why, I would eat them with my eyes closed.'

"I leave it to you, if that was n't great luck for the poor Nabob, the first time that he ate a meal with us. Duperron, who was waiting opposite him, told us about it in the butler's pantry. It seems that it was the most comical thing in the world to see Jansoulet stuff himself with mushrooms, rolling his eyes in terror, while the others watched him curiously without touching their plates. It made him sweat, poor devil! And the best part of it was that he took a second portion; he had the courage to take more. But he poured down bumpers of wine between every two mouthfuls. Well! shall I tell you what I think? That was a very shrewd move on his part, and I am no longer surprised that that fat ox-driver has been the favorite of sovereigns. He knows how to flatter them, in the little things that they don't talk about. In fact, the duke has doted on him since that day."

That little story caused much hilarity, and scattered the clouds collected by a few imprudent words. And thereupon, as the wine had loosened all our tongues, and as we all knew one another better, we rested our elbows on the table and began to talk about masters and places where we had worked, and the amusing things we had seen. Ah! I heard some fine stories and had a glimpse at some domestic scenes! Naturally, I produced my little effect with the story of my pantry at the *Territoriale*, of the time when I used to put my

ragout in the empty safe, which did not prevent our cashier, a great stickler for routine, from changing the combination every two days, as if it contained all the treasures of the Bank of France. M. Louis seemed to enjoy my story. But the most astonishing thing was what little Bois-l'Héry, with his Parisian street-arab's accent, told us of the home life of his employers.

Marquis and Marquise de Bois-l'Héry, second floor, Boulevard Haussmann. Furniture like the Tuileries, blue satin on all the walls, pictures, mantel ornaments, curiosities, a genuine museum, I tell you! overflowing on to the landings. Service very stylish: six servants, chestnut-colored livery in winter, nankeen livery in summer. You see those people everywhere, — at the small Monday parties, at the races, at first nights, at ambassadors' balls, and their names always in the newspapers, with remarks as to Madame's fine toilets and Monsieur's amazing *chic*. Well! all that is nothing but flim-flam, veneer, outside show, and if the marquis needed a hundred sous, no one would loan them to him on his worldly possessions. The furniture is hired by the fortnight from Fitily, the cocottes' upholsterer. The curiosities, the pictures, belong to old Schwalbach, who sends his customers there and makes them pay double price, because a man does n't haggle when he thinks he is buying from a marquis, an amateur. As for the marchioness's dresses, the milliner and dressmaker furnish her with them for exhibition every season, make her wear the new styles, a little

ridiculous sometimes, but instantly adopted by society, because Madame is still a very beautiful woman, and of high repute in the matter of fashion; she is what is called a *lanceuse*. And the servants! Provisional like all the rest, changed every week at the pleasure of the intelligence office, which sends them there to give them practice before taking serious positions. They may have neither sponsors nor certificates; they may have just come from prison or elsewhere. Glanard, the great place-broker on Rue de la Paix, supplies Boulevard Haussmann. The servants stay there one week, two weeks, long enough to purchase recommendations from the marquis, who, mark you, pays nothing and barely feeds them; for in that house the kitchen ovens are cold most of the time, as Monsieur and Madame dine out almost every evening, or attend balls at which supper is served. It is a positive fact that there are people in Paris who take the buffet seriously, and eat their first meal of the day after midnight. The Bois-l'Hérys are well posted as to houses where there is a buffet. They will tell you that you get a very good supper at the Austrian embassy, that the Spanish embassy is a little careless in the matter of wines, and that the Minister of Foreign Affairs gives you the best *chaud-froid de volailles*. Such is the life of that curious household. Nothing of all they have is sewn on; everything is basted or pinned. A gust of wind, and away it all goes. But at all events they are sure of losing nothing. That is what gives the marquis that

blagueur, Père Tranquille air, as he looks you in the face with both hands in his pockets, as much as to say: "Well, what then? What can you do to me?"

And the little tiger, in the aforesaid attitude, with his prematurely old, vicious child's face, copied his master so perfectly that it seemed to me as if I were looking at the man himself sitting in our administrative council, facing the Governor, and overwhelming him with his cynical jests. After all, we must agree that Paris is a wonderful great city, for any one to be able to live here in that way for fifteen years, twenty years of tricks and dodges and throwing dust in people's eyes, without everybody finding him out, and to go on making a triumphant entry into salons in the wake of a footman shouting his name at the top of his voice: "Monsieur le Marquis de Bois-l'Héry."

You see, you must have been to a servants' party before you can believe all that one learns there, and what a curious thing Parisian society is when you look at it thus from below, from the basement. For instance, happening to be between M. Francis and M. Louis, I caught this scrap of confidential conversation concerning Sire de Monpavon. M. Louis said:

"You are doing wrong, Francis, you are in funds just now. You ought to take advantage of it to return that money to the Treasury."

"What can you expect?" replied M. Francis, disconsolately. "Play is consuming us."

"Yes, I know. But beware. We shall not

always be at hand. We may die or go out of the government. In that case you will be called to account over yonder. It will be a terrible time."

I had often heard a whisper of the marquis's forced loan of two hundred thousand francs from the State, at the time when he was receiver-general; but the testimony of his valet de chambre was the worst of all. Ah! if the masters suspected what the servants know, all that they tell in their quarters, if they could hear their names dragged about in the sweepings of the salons and the kitchen refuse, they would never again dare to say so much as: "Close the door," or "Order the carriage." There 's Dr. Jenkins, for example, with the richest practice in Paris, has lived ten years with a magnificent wife, who is eagerly welcomed everywhere; he has done everything he could to conceal his real position, announced his marriage in the newspapers in the English style, and hired only foreign servants who know barely three words of French, but all to no purpose. With these few words, seasoned with faubourg oaths and blows on the table, his coachman Joe, who detests him, told us his whole history while we were at supper.

"She 's going to croak, his Irishwoman, his real wife. Now we 'll see if he 'll marry the other one. Forty-five years old Mistress Maranne is, and not a shilling. You ought to see how afraid she is that he 'll turn her out. Marry her, not marry her — *kss-kss* — what a laugh we 'll have." And the more they gave him to drink, the more he told,

speaking of his unfortunate mistress as the lowest of the low. For my part, I confess that she excited my interest, that false Madame Jenkins, who weeps in every corner, implores her husband as if he were the headsman, and is in danger of being sent about her business when all society believes her to be married, respectable, established for life. The others did nothing but laugh, especially the women. *Dame!* it is amusing when one is in service to see that these ladies of the upper ten have their affronts too, and tormenting cares which keep them awake.

At that moment our party presented a most animated aspect, a circle of merry faces turned toward the Irishman, who carried off the palm by his anecdote. That aroused envy; every one rummaged his memory and dragged out whatever he could find there of old scandals, adventures of betrayed husbands, all the domestic secrets that are poured out on the kitchen table with the remains of dishes and the dregs of bottles. The champagne was beginning to lay hold of its victims among the guests. Joe insisted on dancing a jig on the cloth. The ladies, at the slightest suggestion that was a trifle broad, threw themselves back with the piercing laughter of a person who is being tickled, letting their embroidered skirts drag under the table, which was piled with broken victuals, and covered with grease. M. Louis had prudently withdrawn. The glasses were filled before they were emptied; a chambermaid dipped a handkerchief in hers, which was full of water, and

bathed her forehead with it because her head was going round, she said. It was time that it should end; in fact, an electric bell, ringing loudly in the hall, warned us that the footman on duty at the theatre had called the coachmen. Thereupon Monpavon proposed a toast to the master of the house, thanking him for his little party. M. Noël announced that he would repeat it at Saint-Romans, during the festivities in honor of the bey, to which most of those present would probably be invited. And I was about to rise in my turn, being sufficiently familiar with banquets to know that on such occasions the oldest of the party is expected to propose a toast to the ladies, when the door was suddenly thrown open and a tall footman, all muddy, breathless and perspiring, with a dripping umbrella in his hand, roared at us, with no respect for the guests:

"Come, get out of here, you pack of cads; what are you doing here? Don't I tell you it's done!"

XI.

THE FÊTES IN HONOR OF THE BEY.

IN the regions of the South, of the civilization of long ago, the historic châteaux still standing are very few. At rare intervals some old abbey rears its tottering and dismantled façade on a hillside, pierced with holes which once were windows, which see naught now but the sky, — monuments of dust, baked by the sun, dating from the days of the Crusades or of Courts of Love, without a trace of man among their stones, where even the ivy has ceased to climb, and the acanthus, but where the dried lavender and the *férigoule* perfume the air. Amid all these ruins the château de Saint-Romans stands forth a glorious exception. If you have travelled in the South you have seen it, and you shall see it again in a moment. It is between Valence and Montélimart, in a neighborhood where the railroad runs straight along the Rhone, at the base of the hills of Beaume, Rancoule and Mercurol, the whole glowing vintage of the Hermitage, spread out over five leagues of vines growing in close, straight lines in the vineyards, which seem to the eye like fields of fleece, and extend to the very brink of the river, as green and full of

islands at that spot as the Rhine near Bâle, but with such a flood of sunshine as the Rhine never had. Saint-Romans is opposite, on the other bank; and, notwithstanding the swiftness of the vision, the headlong rush of the railway carriages, which seem determined at every curve to plunge madly into the Rhone, the château is so huge, extends so far along the neighboring slope, that it seems to follow the wild race of the train and fixes in your eyes forever the memory of its flights of steps, its balcony-rails, its Italian architecture, two rather low stories surmounted by a terrace with little pillars, flanked by two wings with slated roofs, and overlooking the sloping banks, where the water from the cascades rushes down to the river, the network of gravelled paths, the vista formed by hedges of great height with a white statue at the end sharply outlined against the blue sky as against the luminous background of a stained-glass window. Far up, among the vast lawns whose brilliant verdure defies the blazing climate, a gigantic cedar rears, terrace-like, its masses of green foliage, with its swaying dark shadows, — an exotic figure, which makes one think, as he stands before that sometime abode of a farmer-general of the epoch of Louis XIV., of a tall negro carrying a courtier's umbrella.

From Valence to Marseille, throughout the valley of the Rhone, Saint-Romans de Bellaigue is as famous as a fairy palace; and a genuine fairy-land in those regions, scorched by the mistral, is that oasis of verdure and of lovely, gushing water.

"When I am rich, mamma," Jansoulet, when he was a mere urchin, used to say to his mother whom he adored, "I 'll give you Saint-Romans de Bellaigue."

And as that man's life seemed the realization of a tale of the *Thousand and One Nights*, as all his wishes were gratified, even the most unconscionable, as his wildest chimeras took definite shape before him, and licked his hands like docile pet spaniels, he had purchased Saint-Romans in order to present it to his mother, newly furnished and gorgeously restored. Although ten years had passed since then, the good woman was not yet accustomed to that magnificent establishment. "Why, you have given me Queen Jeanne's palace, my dear Bernard," she wrote to her son; "I shall never dare to live in it." As a matter of fact she never had lived in it, having installed herself in the steward's house, a wing of modern construction at the end of the main buildings, conveniently situated for overlooking the servants' quarters and the farm, the sheepfolds and the oil-presses, with their rustic outlook of grain in stacks, of olive-trees and vines stretching out over the fields as far as the eye could see. In the great château she would have fancied herself a prisoner in one of those enchanted dwellings where sleep seizes you in the fulness of your joy and does not leave you for a hundred years. Here at all events the peasant woman, who had never been able to accustom herself to that colossal fortune, which had come too late, from too great a distance and like a thunderbolt, felt in

touch with real life by virtue of the going and coming of the laborers, the departure and return of the cattle, their visits to the watering-place, all the details of pastoral life, which awakened her with the familiar crowing of the roosters, the shrill cries of the peacocks, and sent her down the winding staircase before daybreak. She deemed herself simply a trustee of that magnificent property, of which she had charge for her son's benefit, and which she proposed to turn over to him in good condition on the day when, considering himself wealthy enough and weary of living among the *Turs*, he should come, as he had promised, and live with her beneath the shade of Saint-Romans.

Imagine then her untiring, all-pervading watchfulness.

In the twilight of early dawn, the farm servants heard her hoarse, husky voice:

"Olivier — Peyrol — Audibert — Come! It's four o'clock." Then a dive into the huge kitchen, where the maids, heavy with sleep, were warming the soup over the bright, crackling peat fire. They gave her her little plate of red Marseille earthenware, filled with boiled chestnuts, the frugal breakfast of an earlier time which nothing could induce her to change. Off she went at once with long strides, the keys jingling on the great silver key-ring fastened to her belt, her plate in her hand, held in equilibrium by the distaff which she held under her arm as if ready for battle, for she spun all day long, and did not stop even to eat her chestnuts. A glance, as she passed, at the stable,

still dark, where the horses were sluggishly moving about, at the stifling cow-shed, filled with heads impatiently stretched toward the door; and the first rays of dawn, stealing over the courses of stone that supported the embankment of the park, ell upon the old woman running through the dew with the agility of a girl, despite her seventy years, verifying exactly each morning all the treasures of the estate, anxious to ascertain whether the night had stolen the statues and urns, uprooted the centenary trees, dried up the sparkling fountains that plashed noisily in their bowls. Then the bright southern sun, humming and vibrating, outlined upon the gravel of a path, or against the white supporting wall of a terrace, that tall old woman's figure, slender and straight as her distaff, picking up pieces of dead wood, breaking off a branch from a shrub that was out of line, heedless of the scorching reflection which affected her tough skin no more than an old stone bench. About that hour another promenader appeared in the park, less active, less bustling, dragging himself along rather than walking, leaning on the walls and railings, a poor bent, palsied creature, with a lifeless face to which one could assign no age, who, when he was tired, uttered a faint, plaintive cry to call the servant, who was always at hand to assist him to sit down, to huddle himself up on some step, where he would remain for hours, motionless and silent, his mouth half-open, blinking his eyes, soothed by the strident monotony of the locusts, a human blot on the face of the superb landscape.

He was the *oldest*, Bernard's brother, the cherished darling of the Jansoulets, father and mother, the hope and the glory of the family of the junk-dealer, who, faithful like so many more in the South to the superstition concerning the right of primogeniture, had made every conceivable sacrifice to send that handsome, ambitious youth to Paris; and he had started with four or five marshals' batons in his trunk, the admiration of all the girls in the village; but Paris — after it had beaten and twisted and squeezed that brilliant Southern rag in its great vat for ten years, burned him in all its acids, rolled him in all its mire — relegated him at last to the state of battered flotsam and jetsam, embruted, paralyzed, which had killed his father with grief and compelled his mother to sell everything in her house and to live by domestic service in the well-to-do families of the neighborhood. Luckily, just about the time that that relic of Parisian hospitals, sent back to his home by public charity, appeared in Bourg-Saint-Andéol, Bernard, — who was called Cadet, as in all the half-Arab Southern families, where the eldest son always takes the family name and the last comer the name of Cadet, — Bernard was already in Tunis, in process of making his fortune, and sending money home regularly. But what remorse it caused the poor mother to owe everything, even life itself, and the comfort of the wretched invalid, to the brave, energetic lad, of whom his father and she had always been fond, but without genuine tenderness, and whom, from the time he was five years

old, they had been accustomed to treat as a day-laborer, because he was very strong and hairy and ugly, and was already shrewder than any one else in the house in the matter of dealing in old iron. Ah! how she would have liked to have her Cadet with her, to repay him a little of all he was doing for her, to pay in one sum all the arrears of affection, of motherly cosseting that she owed him.

But, you see, these kingly fortunes have the burdens, the vexations of kingly existences. Poor Mother Jansoulet, in her dazzling surroundings, was much like a genuine queen, having undergone the long banishments, the cruel separations and trials which atone for earthly grandeur; one of her sons in a state of stupid lethargy for all time, the other far away, writing little, engrossed by his great interests, always saying, "I will come," and never coming. In twelve years she had seen him but once, in the confusion of the bey's visit at Saint-Romans: a bewildering succession of horses, carriages, fireworks, and festivities. Then he had whirled away again behind his sovereign, having had hardly time to embrace his old mother, who had retained naught of that great joy, so impatiently awaited, save a few newspaper pictures, in which Bernard Jansoulet was exhibited arriving at the château with Ahmed and presenting his aged mother to him, — is not that the way in which kings and queens have their family reunions illustrated in the journals? — plus a cedar of Lebanon, brought from the end of the world, — a great *caramantran* of a tree, which was as costly to

move and as much in the way as the obelisk — being hoisted and planted by force of men and money and horses; a tree which had wrought confusion among the shrubbery as the price of setting up a souvenir commemorative of the royal visit. On his present trip to France, at least, knowing that he had come for several months, perhaps forever, she hoped to have her Bernard all to herself. And lo! he swooped down upon her one fine evening, enveloped in the same triumphant splendor, in the same official pomp, surrounded by a multitude of counts, marquises, fine gentlemen from Paris, who with their servants filled the two great breaks she had sent to meet them at the little station of Giffas, on the other side of the Rhone.

"Come, come, embrace me, my dear mamma. There's no shame in hugging your boy, whom you haven't seen for years, close to your heart. Besides, all these gentlemen are friends of ours. This is Monsieur le Marquis de Monpavon, and Monsieur le Marquis de Bois-l'Héry. Ah! the time has gone by when I used to bring you to eat bean soup with us, little Cabassu and Bompain Jean-Baptiste. You know Monsieur de Géry — he, with my old friend Cardailhac, whom I introduce to you, make up the first batch. But others are coming. Prepare for a terrible how-d'ye-do. We receive the bey in four days."

"The bey again!" said the good woman in dismay. "I thought he was dead."

Jansoulet and his guests could but laugh at her comical alarm, heightened by her Southern accent.

"But there's another, mamma. There are always boys — luckily for me, *sapristi!* But don't you be afraid. You won't have so much trouble on your hands. Friend Cardailhac has undertaken to look after things. We're going to have some superb fêtes. Meanwhile give us some dinner quick, and show us our rooms. Our Parisian friends are tired out."

"Everything is ready, my son," said the old woman simply, standing stiffly erect in her cap of Cambrai linen, with points yellowed by age, which she never laid aside even on great occasions. Wealth had not changed *her*. She was the typical peasant of the Rhone valley, independent and proud, with none of the cunning humility of the rustics described by Balzac, too simple, too, to be puffed up by wealth. Her only pride was to show her son with what painstaking zeal she had acquitted herself of her duties as care-taker. Not an atom of dust, not a trace of dampness on the walls. The whole magnificent ground-floor, the salons with the silk draperies and upholstery of changing hue, taken at the last moment from their coverings; the long summer galleries, with cool, resonant inlaid floors, which the Louis XV. couches, with cane seats and backs upholstered with flowered stuffs, furnished with summer-like coquetry; the enormous dining-hall, decorated with flowers and branches; even the billiard-room, with its rows of gleaming balls, its chandeliers and cue-racks, — the whole vast extent of the château, seen through the long door-windows, wide open upon the broad

seignorial porch, displayed its splendor to the admiration of the visitors, and reflected the beauty of that marvellous landscape, lying serene and peaceful in the setting sun, in the mirrors, the waxed or varnished wainscoting, with the same fidelity with which the poplars bowing gracefully to each other, and the swans, placidly swimming, were reproduced on the mirror-like surface of the ponds. The frame was so beautiful, the general outlook so superb, that the obtrusive, tasteless luxury melted away, disappeared even to the most sensitive eye.

"There 's something to work with," said Cardailhac the manager, with his monocle at his eye, his hat on one side, already planning his stage-setting.

And the haughty mien of Monpavon, who had been somewhat offended at first by the old lady's head-dress when she received them on the porch, gave place to a condescending smile. Certainly there was something to work with, and their friend Jansoulet, under the guidance of men of taste, could give his Maugrabin Highness a very handsome reception. They talked about nothing else all the evening. Sitting in the sumptuous dining-room, with their elbows on the table, warmed by wine and with full stomachs, they planned and discussed. Cardailhac, whose views were broad, had his plan all formed.

"Carte blanche, of course, eh, Nabob?"

"Carte blanche, old fellow. And let old Hemerlingue burst with rage."

Thereupon the manager detailed his plans, the festivities to be divided by days, as at Vaux when

Fouquet entertained Louis XIV.; one day a play, another day Provençal fêtes, *farandoles*, bull-fights, local music; the third day — And, in his mania for management, he was already outlining programmes, posters, while Bois-l'Héry, with both hands in his pockets, lying back in his chair, slept peacefully with his cigar stuck in the corner of his sneering mouth, and the Marquis de Monpavon, always on parade, drew up his breastplate every moment, to keep himself awake.

De Géry had left them early. He had gone to take refuge with the old lady — who had known him, and his brothers, too, when they were children — in the modest parlor in the wing, with the white curtains and light wall-paper covered with figures, where the Nabob's mother tried to revive her past as an artisan, with the aid of some relics saved from the wreck.

Paul talked softly, sitting opposite the handsome old woman with the severe and regular features, the white hair piled on top of her head like the flax on her distaff, who sat erect upon her chair, her flat bust wrapped in a little green shawl; — never in her life had she rested her back against the back of a chair or sat in an armchair. He called her Françoise and she called him Monsieur Paul. They were old friends. And what do you suppose they were talking about? Of her grandchildren, *pardi!* of Bernard's three boys whom she did not know, whom she would have loved so dearly to know.

"Ah! Monsieur Paul, if you knew how I long

for them! I should have been so happy if he had brought me my three little ones instead of all these fine gentlemen. Just think, I have never seen them, except in those pictures yonder. Their mother frightens me a bit, she 's a great lady out-and-out, a Demoiselle Afchin. But the children, I 'm sure they 're not little coxcombs, but would be very fond of their old *granny*. It would seem to me as if it was their father a little boy again, and I 'd give them what I did n't give the father — for, you see, Monsieur Paul, parents are n't always just. They have favorites. But God is just. You ought to see how He deals with the faces that you paint and fix up the best, to the injury of the others. And the favoritism of the old people often does harm to the young."

She sighed as she glanced in the direction of the great alcove, from which, through the high lambrequins and falling draperies, issued at intervals a long, shuddering breath like the moan of a sleeping child who has been whipped and has cried bitterly.

A heavy step on the stairs, an unmelodious but gentle voice, saying in a low tone: "It 's I — don't move," — and Jansoulet appeared. As everybody had gone to bed at the château, he, knowing his mother's habits and that hers was always the last light to be extinguished in the house, had come to see her, to talk with her a little, to exchange the real greeting of the heart which they had been unable to exchange in the presence of others. "Oh! stay, my dear Paul;

we don't mind you." And, becoming a child once more in his mother's presence, he threw his whole long body on the floor at her feet, with cajoling words and gestures really touching to behold. She was very happy too to have him by her side, but she was a little embarrassed none the less, looking upon him as an all-powerful, strange being, exalting him in her artless innocence to the level of an Olympian encompassed by thunder-bolts and lightning-flashes, possessing the gift of omnipotence. She talked to him, inquired if he was still satisfied with his friends, with the condition of his affairs, but did not dare to ask the question she had asked de Géry: "Why did n't you bring me my little grandsons?" — But he broached the subject himself.

"They 're at boarding-school, mamma; as soon as the vacation comes, I 'll send them to you with Bompain. You remember him, don't you, Bompain Jean-Baptiste? And you shall keep them two whole months. They 'll come to you to have you tell them fine stories, they 'll go to sleep with their heads on your apron, like this — "

And he himself, placing his curly head, heavy as lead, on the old woman's knees, recalling the happy evenings of his childhood when he went to sleep that way if he were allowed to do so, if his older brother's head did not take up all the room — he enjoyed, for the first time since his return to France, a few moments of blissful repose, outside of his tumultuous artificial life, pressed against that old motherly heart which he could

hear beating regularly, like the pendulum of the century-old clock standing in a corner of the room, in the profound silence of the night, which one can feel in the country, hovering over the boundless expanse. Suddenly the same long sigh, as of a child who has fallen asleep sobbing, was repeated at the farther end of the room.

"Is that—?"

"Yes," she said, "I have him sleep here. He might need me in the night."

"I should like to see him, to embrace him."

"Come."

The old woman rose, took her lamp, led the way gravely to the alcove, where she softly drew aside the long curtain and motioned to her son to come, without making a noise.

He was asleep. And it was certain that something lived in him that was not there the day before, for, instead of the flaccid immobility in which he was mired all day, he was shaken at that moment by violent tremors, and on his expressionless, dead face there was a wrinkle of suffering life, a contraction as of pain. Jansoulet, profoundly moved, gazed at that thin, wasted, earth-colored face, on which the beard, having appropriated all the vitality of the body, grew with surprising vigor; then he stooped, placed his lips on the forehead moist with perspiration, and, feeling that he started, he said in a low tone, gravely, respectfully, as one addresses the head of the family:

"Good-evening, Aîné."

Perhaps the imprisoned mind heard him in the

depths of its dark, degrading purgatory. But the lips moved and a long groan made answer; a far-off wail, a despairing appeal caused the glance Françoise and her son exchanged to overflow with impotent tears, and drew from them both a simultaneous cry in which their sorrows met: *Pécaïré!* the local word expressive of all pity, all affection.

Early the next morning the uproar began with the arrival of the actors and actresses, an avalanche of caps, chignons, high boots, short petticoats, affected screams, veils floating over the fresh coats of rouge; the women were in a large majority, Cardailhac having reflected that, where a bey was concerned, the performance was of little consequence, that one need only emit false notes from pretty lips, show lovely arms and well-turned legs in the free-and-easy négligé of the operetta. All the plastic celebrities of his theatre were on hand, therefore, Amy Férat at their head, a hussy who had already tried her eye-teeth on the gold of several crowns; also two or three famous comic actors, whose pallid faces produced the same effect of chalky, spectral blotches amid the bright green of the hedgerows as was produced by the plaster statuettes. All that motley crew, enlivened by the journey, the unfamiliar fresh air, and the copious hospitality, as well as by the hope of hooking something in that procession of beys, nabobs, and other purse-bearers, asked nothing better than to caper and sing and make merry, with the vulgar enthusiasm of a crowd of Seine boatmen ashore

on a lark. But Cardailhac did not propose to have it so. As soon as they had arrived, made their toilets and eaten their first breakfast, out came the books; we must rehearse! — There was no time to lose. The rehearsals took place in the small salon near the summer gallery, where they were already beginning to build the stage; and the noise of the hammers, the humming of the refrains, the thin voices supported by the squeaking of the orchestra leader's violin, mingled with the loud trumpet-calls of the peacocks on their perches, were blown to shreds in the mistral, which, failing to recognize the frantic chirping of its grasshoppers, contemptuously whisked it all away on the whirling tips of its wings.

Sitting in the centre of the porch, as if it were the proscenium of his theatre, Cardailhac, while superintending the rehearsals, issued his commands to a multitude of workmen and gardeners, ordered trees to be felled which obstructed the view, drew sketches of the triumphal arches, sent despatches and messengers to mayors, to sub-prefects, to Arles to procure a deputation of girls of the province in the national costume, to Barbantane, where the most skilful dancers of the *farandole* are to be found, to Faraman renowned for its herds of wild bulls and Camarguese horses; and as Jansoulet's name blazed forth at the foot of all these despatches, as the name of the Bey of Tunis also figured in them, everybody acquiesced with the utmost eagerness, the telegraphic messages arrived in an endless stream, and that little Sardanapalus

from Porte-Saint-Martin, who was called Cardailhac, was forever repeating: "There is something to work with;" delighted to throw gold about like handfuls of seed, to have a stage fifty leagues in circumference to arrange, all Provence, of which country that fanatical Parisian was a native, and thoroughly familiar with its resources in the direction of the picturesque.

Dispossessed of her functions, the old lady seldom appeared, gave her attention solely to the farm and her invalid, terrified by that crowd of visitors, those insolent servants whom one could not distinguish from their masters, those women with brazen, coquettish manners, those closely-shaven old villains who resembled wicked priests, all those mad creatures who chased one another through the halls at night with much throwing of pillows, wet sponges, and curtain tassels which they tore off to use as projectiles. She no longer had her son in the evening, for he was obliged to remain with his guests, whose number increased as the time for the fêtes drew near; nor had she even the resource of talking about her grandsons with "Monsieur Paul," whom Jansoulet, always the kindest of men, being a little awed by his friend's seriousness of manner, had sent away to pass a few days with his brothers. And the careful housekeeper, to whom some one came every moment and seized her keys to get spare linen or silverware, to open another room, thinking of the throwing open of her stores of treasures, of the plundering of her wardrobes and her sideboards,

remembering the condition in which the visit of the former bey had left the château, devastated as by a cyclone, said in her patois, feverishly moistening the thread of her distaff:

"May God's fire devour all beys and all future beys!"

At last the day arrived, the famous day of which people still talk throughout the whole province. Oh! about three o'clock in the afternoon, after a sumptuous breakfast presided over by the old mother with a new Cambrai cap on her head, — a breakfast at which, side by side with Parisian celebrities, prefects were present and deputies, all in full dress, with swords at their sides, mayors in their scarfs of office, honest curés cleanly shaven, — when Jansoulet, in black coat and white cravat, surrounded by his guests, went out upon the stoop and saw, framed in that magnificent landscape, amid flags and arches and ensigns, that swarm of heads, that sea of brilliant costumes rising tier above tier on the slopes and thronging the paths; here, grouped in a nosegay on the lawn, the prettiest girls of Arles, whose little white faces peeped sweetly forth from lace neckerchiefs; below, the *farandole* from Barbantane, its eight tambourines in a line, ready for the word, hand in hand, ribbons fluttering in the wind, hats over one ear, the red *taillote* about the loins; still lower, in the succession of terraces, the choral societies drawn up in line, all black beneath their bright-hued caps, the banner-bearer in advance, serious and resolved, with clenched teeth, holding aloft his carved staff;

lower still, on an immense *rond-point*, black bulls in shackles, and Camargue gauchos on their little horses with long white manes, their leggings above their knees, brandishing their spears; and after them more flags and helmets and bayonets, reaching to the triumphal arch at the entrance; then, as far as the eye could see on the other side of the Rhone, — over which two gangs of workmen had just thrown a bridge of boats, so that they could drive from the station to Saint-Romans in a straight line, — was an immense crowd, whole villages pouring down from all the hills, overflowing on the Giffas road in a wilderness of noise and dust, seated on the edge of the ditches, swarming among the elms, piled upon wagons, a formidable living lane for the procession to pass through; and over it all a huge white sun whose arrows a capricious breeze sent in every direction, from the copper of a tambourine to the point of a spear and the fringe of a banner, while the mighty Rhone, high-spirited and free, bore away to the ocean the shifting tableaux of that royal fête. In presence of those marvels, in which all the gold in his coffers shone resplendent, the Nabob felt a thrill of admiration and pride.

"It is fine," he said, turning pale, and his mother, standing behind him, as pale as he, but from indescribable terror, murmured:

"It is too fine for any man. One would think that God was coming."

The feeling of the devout old peasant woman was much the same as that vaguely experienced by all those people who had assembled on the roads as if

to watch the passage of a colossal procession on Corpus Christi, and who were reminded by that visit of an Oriental prince to a child of the province, of the legends of the Magian kings, the arrival of Gaspard the Moor bringing to the carpenter's son the myrrh and the crown.

Amid the heartfelt congratulations that were showered on Jansoulet, Cardailhac, who had not been seen since morning, suddenly appeared, triumphant and perspiring.

"Did n't I tell you that there was something to work with! Eh? Is n't this *chic?* There 's a grouping for you! I fancy our Parisians would pay something handsome to attend a first performance like this."

He lowered his voice because the mother was close by:

"Have you seen our Arles girls? No, look at them more carefully — the first one, the one standing in front to offer the bouquet."

"Why, that 's Amy Férat!"

"*Parbleu!* you can see yourself, my dear fellow, that if the bey throws his handkerchief into that bevy of pretty girls, there must be at least one who knows enough to pick it up. Those innocent creatures would n't know what it meant! Oh! I have thought of everything, you 'll see. It 's all mounted and arranged as if it were on the stage. Farm side, garden side."

At that point, to give an idea of the perfectness of his organization, the manager raised his cane; his gesture was instantly repeated from end to end

of the park, with the result that all the musical societies, all the trumpets, all the tambourines burst forth in unison in the majestic strains of the familiar song of the South: *Grand Soleil de la Provence.* The voices, the brazen notes ascended into the light, swelling the folds of the banners, giving the signal to the dancers of the *farandole,* who began to sway back and forth, to go through their first antics where they stood, while, on the other side of the river, a murmur ran through the crowd like a breeze, caused doubtless by the fear that the bey had arrived unexpectedly from another direction. A second gesture from the manager and the great orchestra subsided, more gradually, with *rallentando* passages and meteoric showers of notes scattered among the foliage; but nothing better could be expected from a company of three thousand persons.

Just then the carriages appeared, the state carriages which had figured in the festivities in honor of the former bey, two great pink and gold chariots *à la mode de Tunis,* which Mother Jansoulet had taken care of as precious relics, and which came forth from the carriage-house with their varnished panels, their hangings and gold fringe as bright and fresh as when they were new. There again Cardailhac's ingenuity had exerted itself freely, and instead of horses, which were a little heavy for those fragile-looking, daintily decorated vehicles, the white reins guided eight mules with ribbons, plumes, and silver bells upon their heads, and caparisoned from head to foot with those marvel-

lous *sparteries*, of which Provence seems to have borrowed the secret from the Moors and to have perfected the cunning art of manufacturing. If the bey were not satisfied with that!

The Nabob, Monpavon, the prefect and one of their generals entered the first carriage, the others took their places in the second and following ones. The curés and mayors, all excited by the wine they had drunk, ran to place themselves at the head of the singing societies of their respective parishes, which were to go to meet the procession; and the whole multitude set forth on the Giffas road.

It was a superbly clear day, but warm and oppressive, three months in advance of the season, as often happens in those impetuous regions where everything is in a hurry, where everything arrives before its time. Although there was not a cloud to be seen, the deathlike stillness of the atmosphere, the wind having fallen suddenly as one lowers a veil, the dazzling expanse, heated white-hot, a solemn silence hovering over the landscape, all indicated that a storm was brewing in some corner of the horizon. The extraordinary torpidity of the surrounding objects gradually affected the persons. Naught could be heard save the tinkling bells of the mules as they ambled slowly along, the measured, heavy tread, through the burning dust, of the bands of singers whom Cardailhac stationed at intervals in the procession, and from time to time, in the double, swarming line of human beings that bordered the road as far as the eye could see, a call, the voices of children, the cry of a peddler of

fresh water, the inevitable accompaniment of all open-air fêtes in the South.

"For heaven's sake, open the window on your side, General, it's stifling," said Monpavon, with crimson face, fearing for his paint; and the lowered sashes afforded the worthy populace a view of those exalted functionaries mopping their august faces, which were terribly flushed and wore the same agonized expression of anticipation, — anticipation of the bey's arrival, of the storm, of something.

Another triumphal arch. Giffas and its long stony street strewn with green palm leaves, its old, dirty houses covered with flowers and decorations. Outside of the village the station, a square white structure, planted like a die at the side of the track, a genuine type of the little country station lost among vineyards, its only room always empty, except for an occasional old woman with a quantity of parcels, waiting in a corner, three hours too early for her train.

In the bey's honor the little building was decked with flags and banners, furnished with rugs and divans and a splendid buffet, on which was a light lunch and water ices all ready for his Highness. When he had arrived and alighted from his carriage, the Nabob shook off the species of haunting disquiet which had oppressed him for a moment past, without his knowing why. Prefects, generals, deputies, black coats and embroidered military coats stood on the broad inner platform, in impressive, solemn groups, with the pursed lips, the shift-

ing from one foot to the other, the self-conscious starts of a public functionary who feels that he is being stared at. And you can imagine whether noses were flattened against window-panes in order to obtain a glimpse of those hierarchic embroideries, of Monpavon's breastplate, which expanded and rose like an omelette soufflée, of Cardailhac gasping for breath as he issued his final orders, and of the beaming face of Jansoulet, their Jansoulet, whose eyes, sparkling between the bloated, sunburned cheeks, resembled two great gilt nails in a piece of Cordova leather. Suddenly the electric bells began to ring. The station-agent rushed frantically out to the track: "The train is signalled, messieurs. It will be here in eight minutes." Everybody started. Then a general instinctive impulse caused every watch to be drawn from its fob. Only six minutes more. Thereupon, in the profound silence, some one exclaimed: "Look there!" On the right, in the direction from which the train was to come, two high vine-covered hills formed a tunnel into which the track plunged and disappeared, as if swallowed up. At that moment the whole sky in that direction was as black as ink, obscured by an enormous cloud, a threatening wall cutting the blue as with a knife, rearing palisades, lofty cliffs of basalt on which the light broke like white foam with the pallid gleam of moonlight. In the solemn silence of the deserted track, along that line of rails where one felt that everything, so far as the eye could see, stood aside for the passage of his Highness, that aërial cliff was a terrifying

spectacle as it advanced, casting its shadow before it with that illusion of perspective which gave to the cloud a slow, majestic movement and to its shadow the rapid pace of a galloping horse. "What a storm we are going to have directly!" That was the thought that came to them all; but they had not time to express it, for an ear-piercing whistle was heard and the train appeared in the depths of the dark tunnel. A typical royal train, short and travelling fast, decorated with French and Tunisian flags, its groaning, puffing locomotive, with an enormous bouquet of roses on its breast, representing the maid of honor at a wedding of Leviathans.

It came rushing on at full speed, but slackened its pace as it drew near. The functionaries formed a group, drawing themselves up, arranging their swords, adjusting their false collars, while Jansoulet walked along the track toward the train, the obsequious smile on his lips and his back already bent for the "Salem alek!" The train continued to move, very slowly. Jansoulet thought that it had stopped, and placed his hand on the door of the royal carriage glittering with gold under the black sky; but the headway was too great, doubtless, for the train still went forward, the Nabob walking beside it, trying to open that infernal door which resisted all his efforts, and with the other hand making a sign of command to the machine. But the machine did not obey. "Stop, I tell you!" It did not stop. Impatient at the delay, he sprang upon the velvet-covered step, and with the some-

what presumptuous impetuosity, which used to please the former bey so much, he cried out, thrusting his great curly head in at the window:

"Station for Saint-Romans, your Highness!"

You know that sort of vague light peculiar to dreams, that colorless, empty atmosphere, in which everything assumes a ghostly aspect? well, Jansoulet was suddenly enveloped, made prisoner, paralyzed by it. He tried to speak, but the words would not come; his nerveless fingers clung so feebly to their support that he nearly fell backward. In heaven's name, what had he seen? Half reclining on a divan which extended across one end of the car, his fine head with its dead-white complexion and its long, silky black beard resting on his hand, the bey, buttoned to the chin in his Oriental frock-coat, without other ornament than the broad ribbon of the Legion of Honor across his breast and the diamond clasp in his cap, was fanning himself impassively with a little fan of *spartum*, embroidered with gold. Two aides-de-camp were standing near him and an engineer of the French company. Opposite him, upon another divan, in a respectful attitude, but one indicating high favor, as they alone remained seated in presence of the bey, both as yellow as saffron, their long whiskers falling over their white cravats, sat two owls, one fat, the other thin. They were the Hemerlingues, father and son, who had reconquered his Highness and were carrying him in triumph to Paris. A ghastly dream! All those people, although they knew Jansoulet well, stared coolly at him as if his

face conveyed no idea to them. Pitiably pale, with the perspiration standing on his brow, he stammered: "But, your Highness, do you not mean to leave —" A livid flash, like that of a sabre stroke, followed by a frightful peal of thunder, cut him short. But the flash that shot from the monarch's eyes seemed far more terrible to him. Rising to his feet and stretching out his arm, the bey crushed him with these words, prepared in advance and uttered slowly in a rather guttural voice accustomed to the harsh Arabic syllables, but in very pure French:

"You may return home, Mercanti. The foot goes where the heart leads it, mine shall never enter the door of the man who has robbed my country."

Jansoulet tried to say a word. The bey waved his hand: "Begone!" And the engineer having pressed the button of an electric bell, to which a whistle replied, the train, which had not come to a full stop, stretched and strained its iron muscles and started ahead under full steam, waving its flags in the wind of the storm amid whirling clouds of dense smoke and sinister flashes.

He stood by the track, dazed, staggering, crushed, watching his fortune recede and disappear, heedless of the great drops of rain that began to fall upon his bare head. Then, when the others rushed toward him, surrounded him and overwhelmed him with questions: "Is n't the Bey going to stop?" he stammered a few incoherent words: "Court intrigues — infamous machi-

nations." And suddenly, shaking his fist at the train which had already disappeared, with blood-shot eyes and the foam of fierce wrath on his lips, he cried with the roar of a wild beast:

"Vile curs!"

"Courage, Jansoulet, courage."

You can guess who said that, and who, passing his arm through the Nabob's, tried to straighten him up, to make him throw out his breast as he did, led him to the carriages amid the stupefied silence of the braided coats, and helped him to enter, crushed and bewildered, as a relative of the deceased is hoisted into a mourning carriage at the close of the lugubrious ceremony. The rain was beginning to fall, the peals of thunder followed one another rapidly. They crowded into the carriages, which started hurriedly homeward. Thereupon a heart-rending, yet comical thing took place, one of those cruel tricks which cowardly destiny plays upon its victims when they are down. In the fading light, the increasing obscurity caused by the squall, the crowd that filled all the approaches to the station believed that it could distinguish a Royal Highness amid such a profusion of gold lace, and as soon as the wheels began to revolve, a tremendous uproar, an appalling outcry which had been brewing in all those throats for an hour past, arose and filled the air, rebounded from hill to hill and echoed through the valley: "Vive le Bey!" Warned by that signal, the first flourishes rang out, the singing societies struck up in their turn, and as the noise increased from point to

point, the road from Giffas to Saint-Romans was naught but one long, unbroken wave of sound. In vain did Cardailhac, all the gentlemen, Jansoulet himself, lean out of the windows and make desperate signs: "Enough! enough!" Their gestures were lost in the confusion, in the darkness; what was seen of them seemed an encouragement to shout louder. And I give you my word that it was in no wise needed. All those Southerners, whose enthusiasm had been kept at fever heat since morning, excited still more by the tedium of the long wait and by the storm, gave all that they had of voice, of breath, of noisy energy, blending with the national hymn of Provence that oft-repeated cry, which broke in upon it like a refrain: "Vive le Bey!" The majority had no sort of idea what a bey might be, did not even picture him to themselves, and gave a most extraordinary pronunciation to the unfamiliar title, as if it had three *b's* and ten *y's*. But no matter, they worked themselves into a frenzy over it, threw up their hands, waved their hats, and waxed excited over their own antics. Women, deeply affected, wiped their eyes; and suddenly the piercing cry of a child came from the topmost branches of an elm: "Mamma, mamma, I see him!" He saw him! They all saw him for that matter; to this day they would all take their oath that they saw him.

Confronted with such delirious excitement, finding it impossible to impose silence and tranquillity upon that mob, there was but one course for the people in the carriages to pursue: to let them

alone, raise the windows and drive at full speed in order to abridge that unpleasant martyrdom as much as possible. Then it was terrible. Seeing the cortège quicken its pace, the whole road began to run with it. The *farandoleurs* of Barbantane, hand-in-hand, bounded from side to side, to the muffled wheezing of their tambourines, forming a human garland around the carriage doors. The singing societies, unable to sing at that breathless pace, but howling none the less, dragged their banner-bearers along, the banners thrown over their shoulders; and the stout, red-faced curés, panting, pushing their huge overburdened paunches before them, still found strength to shout in the mules' ears, in sympathetic, effusive tones: "Vive notre bon Bey!" And with it all, the rain, the rain falling in bucketfuls, in sheets, soiling the pink carriages, increasing the confusion, giving to that triumphal return the aspect of a rout, but a laughable rout, compounded of songs, laughter, blasphemy, frantic embraces and infernal oaths, something like the return from a Corpus Christi procession in the storm, with cassocks tucked up, surplices thrown over the head, and the good Lord hastily housed under a porch.

A dull rumbling announced to the poor Nabob, sitting silent and motionless in a corner of his carriage, that they were crossing the bridge of boats. They had arrived.

"At last!" he said, looking out through the dripping windows at the foam-tipped waves of the Rhone, where the storm seemed to him like repose

after that through which he had passed. But, when the first carriage reached the triumphal arch at the end of the bridge, bombs were exploded, the drums beat, saluting the monarch's arrival upon his faithful subject's domain, and the climax of irony was reached when, in the half light, a blaze of gas suddenly illuminated the roof of the château with letters of fire, over which the rain and wind caused great shadows to run to and fro, but which still displayed very legibly the legend: "Viv' L' B'Y M'H'MED."

"That 's the bouquet," said the unhappy Nabob, unable to restrain a smile, a very pitiful, very bitter smile. But no, he was mistaken. The bouquet awaited him at the door of the château; and it was Amy Férat who came forward to present it to him, stepping out of the group of maidens from Arles, who were sheltering their watered silk skirts and figured velvet caps under the marquée, awaiting the first carriage. Her bunch of flowers in her hand, modestly, with downcast eyes and roguish ankle, the pretty actress darted to the door and stood almost kneeling in an attitude of salutation, which she had been rehearsing for a week. Instead of the bey, Jansoulet stepped out, excited, stiffly erect, and passed her by without even looking at her. And as she stood there, her nosegay in her hand, with the stupid expression of a balked fairy, Cardailhac said to her with the *blague* of a Parisian who speedily makes the best of things:

"Take away your flowers, my dear, your affair

has fallen through. The Bey is n't coming — he forgot his handkerchief, and as that 's what he uses to talk to ladies, why, you understand — "

Now, it is night. Everybody is asleep at Saint-Romans after the tremendous hurly-burly of the day. The rain is still falling in torrents, the banners feebly wave their drenched carcasses, one can hear the water rushing down the stone steps, transformed into cascades. Everything is streaming and dripping. A sound of water, a deafening sound of water. Alone in his magnificently furnished chamber with its seignorial bed and its curtains of Chinese silk with purple stripes, the Nabob is still stirring, striding back and forth, revolving bitter thoughts. His mind is no longer intent upon the affront to himself, the public affront in the presence of thirty thousand persons, nor upon the murderous insult that the Bey addressed to him in presence of his mortal enemies. No, that Southerner with his wholly physical sensations, swift as the action of new weapons, has already cast away all the venom of his spleen. Moreover court favorites are always prepared, by many celebrated precedents, for such overwhelming falls from grace. What terrifies him is what he can see behind that insult. He reflects that all his property is over yonder, houses, counting-rooms, vessels, at the mercy of the bey, in that lawless Orient, the land of arbitrary power. And, pressing his burning brow against the streaming glass, with the perspiration standing on his back,

and hands cold as ice, he stares vacantly out into the night, no darker, no more impenetrable than his own destiny.

Suddenly he hears footsteps, hurried footsteps, at his door.

"Who 's there?"

"Monsieur," says Noël, entering the room half-dressed, "a very urgent despatch sent from the telegraph office by special messenger."

"A despatch! — What is the next thing?"

He takes the blue paper and opens it with trembling hand. The god, having already been wounded twice, is beginning to feel that he is vulnerable, to lose his assurance; he experiences the apprehensions, the nervous tremors of other men. The signature first. *Mora!* Is it possible? The duke, the duke telegraph to him! Yes, there is no doubt about it. *M-o-r-a.*

And above:

Popolasca is dead. Election in Corsica soon. You are official candidate.

A deputy! That means salvation. With that he has nothing to fear. A representative of the great French nation is not to be treated like a simple *mercanti*. Down with the Hemerlingues!

"O my duke, my noble duke!"

He was so excited that he could not sign the receipt.

"Where 's the man who brought this despatch?" he asked abruptly.

"Here, Monsieur Jansoulet," replied a hearty voice from the hall, in the familiar Southern dialect.

He was a lucky dog, that messenger.

"Come in," said the Nabob.

And, after handing him his receipt, he plunged his hands into his pockets, which were always full, grasped as many gold pieces as he could hold and threw them into the poor devil's cap as he stood there stammering, bewildered, dazzled by the fortune that had befallen him in the darkness of that enchanted palace.

XII.

A CORSICAN ELECTION.

"POZZONEGRO, near Sartène.

"I AM able at last to write you of my movements, my dear Monsieur Joyeuse. In the five days that we have been in Corsica we have travelled about so much, talked so much, changed carriages and steeds so often, riding sometimes on mules, sometimes on asses, and sometimes even on men's backs to cross streams, have written so many letters, made notes on so many petitions, given away so many chasubles and altar-cloths, propped up so many tottering church steeples, founded so many asylums, proposed and drunk so many toasts, absorbed so much talk and Talano wine and white cheese, that I have found no time to send an affectionate word to the little family circle around the big table, from which I have been missing for two weeks. Luckily my absence will not last much longer, for we expect to leave day after to-morrow and travel straight through to Paris. So far as the election is concerned, I fancy that our trip has been successful. Corsica is a wonderful country, indolent and poor, a mixture of poverty and of pride which makes both the noble and bourgeois families keep up a certain appearance of opulence even at the price of the most painful privations. They talk here in all serious-

ness of the great wealth of Popolasca, the indigent deputy whom death robbed of the hundred thousand francs his resignation in the Nabob's favor would have brought him. All these people have, moreover, a frenzied longing for offices, an administrative mania, a craving to wear a uniform of some sort and a flat cap on which they can write: "Government clerk." If you should give a Corsican peasant his choice between the richest farm in Beauce and the baldric of the humblest forest-warden, he would not hesitate a moment, he would choose the baldric. Under such circumstances you can judge whether a candidate with a large fortune and governmental favors at his disposal has a good chance of being elected. Elected M. Jansoulet will be, therefore, especially if he succeeds in the move which he is making at this moment and which has brought us to the only inn of a small village called Pozzonegro (Black Well), a genuine well, all black with verdure, fifty cottages built of red stone clustered around a church of the Italian type, in the bottom of a ravine surrounded by steep hills, by cliffs of bright-colored sandstone, scaled by vast forests of larches and junipers. Through my open window, at which I am writing, I can see a bit of blue sky overhead, the orifice of the black well; below, on the little square, shaded by an enormous walnut tree, as if the shadows were not dense enough already, two shepherds dressed in skins are playing cards on the stone curb of a fountain. Gambling is the disease of this country of sloth, where the crops are harvested by men from Lucca. The two poor devils before me could not find a sou in their pockets; one stakes his knife, the other a cheese wrapped in vine leaves, the two stakes being placed beside them on the stone. A little curé is watching them, smoking

his cigar, and apparently taking the liveliest interest in their game.

"And that is all — not a sound anywhere except the regular dropping of the water on the stone, the exclamations of one of the gamblers, who swears by the *sango del seminario;* and in the common-room of the inn, under my chamber, our friend's earnest voice, mingled with the buzzing of the illustrious Paganetti, who acts as interpreter in his conversation with the no less illustrious Piedigriggio.

"M. Piedigriggio (Grayfoot) is a local celebrity. He is a tall old man of seventy-five, still very erect in his short cloak over which his long white beard falls, his brown woollen Catalan cap on his hair, which is also white, a pair of scissors in his belt, which he uses to cut the great leaves of green tobacco in the hollow of his hand; a venerable old fellow in fact, and when he crossed the square and shook hands with the curé, with a patronizing smile at the two gamblers, I never would have believed that I had before me the famous brigand Piedigriggio, who, from 1840 to 1860, *held the thickets* in Monte-Rotondo, tired out gendarmes and troops of the line, and who to-day, his seven or eight murders with the rifle or the knife being outlawed by lapse of time, goes his way in peace throughout the region that saw his crimes, and is a man of considerable importance. This is the explanation: Piedigriggio has two sons, who, following nobly in his footsteps, have toyed with the rifle and now hold the thickets in their turn. Impossible to lay hands upon or to find, as their father was for twenty years, informed by the shepherds of the movements of the gendarmerie, as soon as the gendarmes leave a village, the brigands appear there. The older of the

two, Scipion, came last Sunday to Pozzonegro to hear mass. To say that people are fond of them, and that the grasp of the bloodstained hand of these villains is agreeable to all those who receive it, would be to calumniate the pacific inhabitants of this commune; but they fear them, and their will is law.

"Now it appears that the Piedigriggios have taken it into their heads to espouse the cause of our rival in the election, a formidable alliance, which may cause two whole cantons to vote against us, for the knaves have legs as long, in proportion, as the range of their guns. Naturally we have the gendarmes with us, but the brigands are much more powerful. As our host said to us this morning: 'The gendarmes, they go, but the banditti, they stay.' In the face of that very logical reasoning, we realized that there was but one thing to do, to treat with the Piedigriggios, and make a bargain with them. The mayor said a word to the old man, who consulted his sons, and they are discussing the terms of the treaty downstairs. I can hear the Governor's voice from here: 'Nonsense, my dear fellow, I'm an old Corsican myself, you know.' And then the other's tranquil reply, cut simultaneously with his tobacco by the grating noise of the great scissors. The 'dear fellow' does not seem to have faith; and I am inclined to think that matters will not progress until the gold pieces ring on the table.

"The trouble is that Paganetti is well known in his native country. The value of his word is written on the public square at Corte which still awaits the monument to Paoli, in the vast crop of humbuggery that he has succeeded in planting in this sterile Ithacan island, and in the flabby, empty pocket-books of all the wretched village curés, petty bourgeois, petty noblemen, whose

slender savings he has filched by dangling chimerical *combinazioni* before their eyes. Upon my word, he needed all his phenomenal assurance, together with the financial resources he now has at his command to satisfy all demands, to venture to show his face here again.

"After all, how much truth is there in these fabulous works undertaken by the *Caisse Territoriale?*

"None at all.

"Mines which do not yield, which will never yield, as they exist only on paper; quarries which as yet know not pickaxe or powder; untilled, sandy moors, which they survey with a gesture, saying, 'We begin here, and we go way over yonder, to the devil.' It 's the same with the forests, — one whole densely wooded slope of Monte-Rotondo, which belongs to us, it seems, but which it is not practicable to cut unless aeronauts should do duty as woodcutters. So as to the mineral baths, of which this wretched hamlet of Pozzonegro is one of the most important, with its fountain, whose amazing ferruginous properties Paganetti is constantly vaunting. Of packet-boats, not a trace. Yes, there is an old, half-ruined Genoese tower, on the shore of the Bay of Ajaccio, with this inscription on a tarnished panel over its hermetically closed door: 'Paganetti Agency, Maritime Company, Bureau of Information.' The bureau is kept by fat gray lizards in company with a screech-owl. As for the railroads, I noticed that all the excellent Corsicans to whom I mentioned them, replied with cunning smiles, disconnected phrases, full of mystery; and not until this morning did I obtain the exceedingly farcical explanation of all this reticence.

"I had read among the documents which the Governor waves before our eyes from time to time, like a

fan to inflate his *blague*, a deed of a marble quarry at a place called Taverna, two hours from Pozzonegro. Availing myself of our visit to this place, I jumped on a mule this morning, without a word to any one, and, guided by a tall rascal, with the legs of a deer, — a perfect specimen of the Corsican poacher or smuggler, with his great red pipe between his teeth, — I betook myself to Taverna. After a horrible journey among cliffs intersected by crevasses, bogs, and abysses of immeasurable depth, where my mule maliciously amused himself by walking close to the edge, as if he were measuring it with his shoes, we descended an almost perpendicular surface to our destination, — a vast desert of rocks, absolutely bare, all white with the droppings of gulls and mews; for the sea is just below, very near, and the silence of the place was broken only by the beating of the waves and the shrill cries of flocks of birds flying in circles. My guide, who has a holy horror of customs officers and gendarmes, remained at the top of the cliff, because of a small custom-house station on the shore, while I bent my steps toward a tall red building which reared its three stories aloft in that blazing solitude, the windows broken, the roof-tiles in confusion, and over the rotting door an immense sign: '*Caisse Territoriale. Carr — bre* — 54.' The wind and sun and rain have destroyed the rest.

"Certainly there has been at some time an attempt made to work the mine, for there is a large, square, yawning hole, with cleanly-cut edges and patches of red streaked with brown, like leprous spots, along its sterile walls; and among the nettles at the bottom enormous blocks of marble of the variety known in commerce as *griotte*, condemned blocks of which no use can be made

for lack of a proper road leading to the quarry, or a harbor which would enable boats to approach the hill; and, more than all else, for lack of sufficient funds to supply either of those needs. So the quarry, although within a few cable-lengths of the shore, is abandoned, useless, and a nuisance, like Robinson Crusoe's boat, with the same drawbacks as to availability. These details of the distressing history of our only territorial possession were furnished me by an unhappy survivor, shivering with fever, whom I found in the basement of the yellow house trying to cook a piece of kid over the acrid smoke of a fire of mastic branches.

"That man, who comprises the whole staff of the *Caisse Territoriale* in Corsica, is Paganetti's foster-father, an ex-lighthouse-keeper who does not mind loneliness. The Governor leaves him there partly from charity, and also because an occasional letter from the Taverna quarry produces a good effect at meetings of shareholders. I had great difficulty in extorting any information from that three-fourths wild man, who gazed at me suspiciously, in ambush behind his goat-skin *pelone;* he did tell me, however, unintentionally, what the Corsicans understand by the term railroad, and why they assume this mysterious manner when they mention it. While I was trying to find out whether he knew anything of the scheme for an iron road in the island, the old fellow did not put on the cunning smile I had observed in his compatriots, but said to me quite naturally, in very good French, but in a voice as rusty and stiff as an old lock that is seldom used:

"'Oh! moussiou, no need of railroads here —'

"'But they are very valuable, very useful to make communication easier.'

"'I don't say that ain't true; but with the gendarmes we don't need anything more.'

"'The gendarmes?'

"'To be sure.'

"The misunderstanding lasted fully five minutes, before I finally comprehended that the secret police are known here as the 'railroads.' As there are many Corsican police officials on the Continent, they make use of an honest euphemism to describe their degrading occupation in their family circle. You ask the kinsmen of one of them, 'Where's your brother Ambrosini?' 'What is your Uncle Barbicaglia doing?' They will answer, with a little wink: 'He has a place on the railroad;' and everybody knows what that means. Among the lower classes, the peasants, who have never seen a railroad and have no idea what it is, there is a perfectly serious belief that the great department of the secret imperial police has no other name than that. Our principal agent in the island shares that touching innocence; this will give you an idea of the condition of the *Line from Ajaccio to Bastia via Bonifacio, Porto Vecchio, etc.*, which figures on the great books with green backs in the Paganetti establishment. In a word, all the assets of the territorial bank are comprised in a few desks and two old hovels — the whole hardly worthy of a place in the rubbish-yard on Rue Saint-Ferdinand, where I hear the weathercocks creaking and the old doors slamming every night as I fall asleep.

"But in that case what has been done, what is being done with the enormous sums that M. Jansoulet has poured into the treasury in the last five months, to say nothing of what has come from other sources attracted by that magic name? I fully agreed with you that all

these soundings and borings and purchases of land, which appear on the books in a fine round hand, were immeasurably exaggerated. But how could any one suspect such infernal impudence? That is why M. le Gouverneur was so disgusted at the idea of taking me on this electoral trip. I have not thought it best to have an explanation on the spot. My poor Nabob has enough on his mind with his election. But, as soon as we have returned, I shall place all the details of my long investigation before his eyes; and I will extricate him from this den of thieves by persuasion or by force. They have finished their negotiations downstairs. Old Piedigriggio is crossing the square, playing with his long peasant's purse, which looks to me to be well-filled. The bargain is concluded, I suppose. A hasty adieu, my dear Monsieur Joyeuse; remember me to the young ladies, and bid them keep a tiny place for me at the work-table. "PAUL DE GÉRY."

The electoral cyclone in which they had been enveloped in Corsica crossed the sea in their wake like the blast of a sirocco, followed them to Paris and blew madly through the apartments on Place Vendôme, which were thronged from morning till night by the usual crowd, increased by the constant arrival of little men as dark as carob-beans, with regular, bearded faces, some noisy, buzzing and chattering, others silent, self-contained and dogmatic, the two types of the race in which the same climate produces different results. All those famished islanders made appointments, in the wilds of their uncivilized fatherland, to meet one another at the Nabob's table, and his house had be-

come a tavern, a restaurant, a market-place. In the dining-room, where the table was always set, there was always some Corsican, newly arrived, in the act of taking a bite, with the bewildered and greedy expression of a relation from the country.

The noisy, blatant breed of election agents is the same everywhere; but these men were distinguished by something more of ardor, a more impassioned zeal, a turkey-cock vanity heated white-hot. The most insignificant clerk, inspector, mayor's secretary, or village schoolmaster talked as if he had a whole canton behind him and the pockets of his threadbare coat stuffed full of ballots. And it is a fact, which Jansoulet had had abundant opportunity to verify, that in the Corsican villages the families are so ancient, of such humble origin, with so many ramifications, that a poor devil who breaks stones on the high road finds some way to work out his relationship to the greatest personages on the island, and in that way wields a serious influence. As the national temperament, proud, cunning, intriguing, revengeful, intensifies these complications, the result is that great care must be taken as to where one puts his foot among the snares that are spread from one end of the island to the other.

The most dangerous part of it was that all those people were jealous of one another, detested one another, quarrelled openly at the table on the subject of the election, exchanging black glances, grasping the hilts of their knives at the slightest dispute, talking very loud and all together, some

in the harsh, resonant Genoese patois, others in the most comical French, choking with restrained insults, throwing at one another's heads the names of unknown villages, dates of local history which suddenly placed two centuries of family feuds upon the table between two covers. The Nabob was afraid that his breakfasts would end tragically, and tried to calm all those violent natures with his kindly, conciliatory smile. But Paganetti reassured him. According to him, the vendetta, although still kept alive in Corsica, very rarely employs the stiletto and the firearm in these days. The anonymous letter has taken their place. Indeed, unsigned letters were received every day at Place Vendôme, after the style of this one: —

"You are so generous, Monsieur Jansoulet, that I can do no less than point out to you Sieur Bornalinco (Ange-Marie) as a traitor who has gone over to your enemies; I have a very different story to tell of his cousin Bornalinco (Louis-Thomas), who is devoted to the good cause," etc.

Or else:

"Monsieur Jansoulet, I fear that your election will be badly managed and will come to nothing if you continue to employ Castirla (Josué) of the canton of Odessa, while his kinsman, Luciani, is the very man you need."

Although he finally gave up reading such missives, the poor candidate was shaken by all those doubts, by all those passions, being caught in a network of petty intrigues, his mind full of terror

and distrust, anxious, excited, nervous, feeling keenly the truth of the Corsican proverb:

"If you are very ill-disposed to your enemy, pray that he may have an election in his family."

We can imagine that the check-book and the three great drawers in the mahogany commode were not spared by that cloud of devouring locusts that swooped down upon "Moussiou Jansoulet's" salons. Nothing could be more comical than the overbearing way in which those worthy islanders negotiated their loans, abruptly and with an air of defiance. And yet they were not the most terrible, except in the matter of boxes of cigars, which vanished in their pockets so rapidly as to make one think they proposed to open a *Civette* on their return to the island. But just as wounds grow red and inflamed on very hot days, so the election had caused an amazing recrudescence in the systematic pillage that reigned in the house. The expenses of advertising were considerable: Moëssard's articles, sent to Corsica in packages of twenty thousand, thirty thousand copies, with portraits, biographies, pamphlets, all the printed clamor that it is possible to raise around a name. And then there was no diminution in the ordinary consumption of the panting pumps established around the reservoir of millions. On one side the Work of Bethlehem, a powerful machine, pumping at regular intervals, with tremendous energy; the *Caisse Territoriale*, with marvellous power of suction, indefatigable in its operation, with triple and quadruple action, of several thousand

horse-power; and the Schwalbach pump, and the Bois-l'Héry pump, and how many more; some of enormous size, making a great noise, with audacious pistons, others more quiet and reserved, with tiny valves, bearings skilfully oiled — toy-pumps as delicately constructed as the probosces of insects whose thirst causes stings, and which deposit poison on the spot from which they suck their life; but all working with the same unanimity, and fatally certain to cause, if not an absolute drought, at all events a serious lowering of the level.

Already unfavorable reports, vague as yet, were in circulation on the Bourse. Was it a manœuvre of the enemy, of that Hemerlingue against whom Jansoulet was waging ruthless financial war, trying to defeat all his operations, and losing very considerable sums at the game, because he had against him his own excitable nature, his adversary's cool-headedness and the bungling of Paganetti, whom he used as a man of straw? In any event, the star of gold had turned pale. Paul de Géry learned as much from Père Joyeuse, who had entered the employ of a broker as book-keeper, and was thoroughly posted on matters connected with the Bourse; but what alarmed him more than all else was the Nabob's strange agitation, the craving for excitement which had succeeded the admirable calmness of conscious strength, of serenity, the disappearance of his Southern sobriety, the way in which he stimulated himself before eating by great draughts of *raki*, talking loud and laughing

uproariously like a common sailor during his watch on deck. One felt that the man was tiring himself out to escape some absorbing thought, which was visible nevertheless in the sudden contraction of all the muscles of his face when it passed through his mind, or when he was feverishly turning over the pages of his tarnished little memorandum-book. The serious interview, the decisive explanation that Paul was so desirous to have with him, Jansoulet would not have at any price. He passed his evenings at the club, his mornings in bed, and as soon as he was awake had his bedroom full of people, who talked to him while he was dressing, and to whom he replied with his face in his wash-bowl. If, by any miracle, de Géry caught him for a second, he would run away or cut him short with a: "Not now, I beg you." At last the young man resorted to heroic measures.

One morning about five o'clock, Jansoulet, on returning from his club, found on the table beside his bed a little note which he took at first for one of the anonymous denunciations which he received every day. It was a denunciation, in very truth, but signed, written with the utmost frankness, breathing the loyalty and youthful seriousness of the man who wrote it. De Géry set before him very clearly all the infamous schemes, all the speculations by which he was surrounded. He called the rascals by their names, without circumlocution. There was not one among the ordinary habitués of the house who was not a suspicious

character, not one who came there for any other purpose than to steal or lie. From attic to cellar, pillage and waste. Bois-l'Héry's horses were unsound, the Schwalbach gallery a fraud, Moëssard's articles notorious blackmail. De Géry had drawn up a long detailed list of those impudent frauds, with proofs in support of his allegations; but he commended especially to Jansoulet's attention the matter of the *Caisse Territoriale*, as the really dangerous element in his situation. In the other matters money alone was at risk; in this, honor was involved. Attracted by the Nabob's name, by his title of president of the council, hundreds of stockholders had walked into that infamous trap, seeking gold in the footsteps of that lucky miner. That fact imposed a terrible responsibility upon him which he would understand by reading the memorandum relating to the concern, which was falsehood and fraud, pure and simple, from beginning to end.

"You will find the memorandum to which I refer," said Paul de Géry in conclusion, "in the first drawer in my desk. Various receipts are affixed to it. I have not put it in your room, because I am distrustful of Noël as of all the rest. To-night, when I go away, I will hand you the key. For I am going away, my dear friend and benefactor, I am going away, overflowing with gratitude for the benefits you have conferred on me, and in despair because your blind confidence has prevented me from repaying them in part. My conscience as a man of honor would reproach me

were I to remain longer useless at my post. I am looking on at a terrible disaster, the pillage of a Summer Palace, which I am powerless to check; but my heart rises in revolt at all that I see. I exchange grasps of the hand which dishonor me. I am your friend, and I seem to be their confederate. And who knows whether, by living on in such an atmosphere, I might not become so?"

This letter, which he read slowly, thoroughly, even to the spaces between the words and the lines, made such a keen impression on the Nabob that, instead of going to bed, he went at once to his young secretary. Paul occupied a study at the end of the suite of salons, where he slept on a couch, a provisional arrangement which he had never cared to change. The whole house was still asleep. As he walked through the long line of great salons, which were not used for evening receptions, so that the curtains were always open and at that moment admitted the uncertain light of a Parisian dawn, the Nabob paused, impressed by the melancholy aspect that his magnificent surroundings presented. In the heavy odor of tobacco and various liquors that filled the rooms, the furniture, the wainscotings, the decorations seemed faded yet still new. Stains on the crumpled satin, ashes soiling the beautiful marbles, marks of boots on the carpet reminded him of a huge first-class railway carriage, bearing the marks of the indolence, impatience and ennui of a long journey, with the destructive contempt of the public for a luxury for which it has paid.

Amid that stage scenery, all in position and still warm from the ghastly comedy that was played there every day, his own image, reflected in twenty cold, pale mirrors, rose before him, at once ominous and comical, ill-at-ease in his fashionable clothes, with bloated cheeks and face inflamed and dirty.

What an inevitable and disenchanting morrow to the insane life he was leading!

He lost himself for a moment in gloomy thoughts; then, with the vigorous shrug of the shoulders which was so familiar in him, that packman's gesture with which he threw off any too painful preoccupation, he resumed the burden which every man carries with him, and which causes the back to bend more or less, according to his courage or his strength, and entered de Géry's room, where he found him already dressed and standing in front of his open desk, arranging papers.

"First of all, my boy," said Jansoulet, closing the door softly on their interview, "answer me this question frankly. Are the motives set forth in your letter your real motives for resolving to leave me? Is n't there underneath it all one of these infamous stories that I know are being circulated against me in Paris? I am sure you would be frank enough to tell me, and to give me a chance to — to set myself right in your eyes."

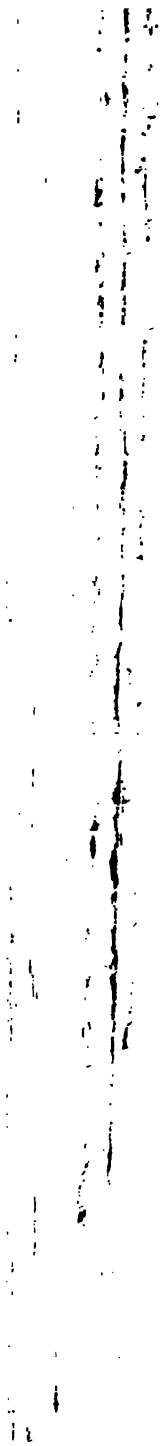
Paul assured him that he had no other reasons for going, but that those he had mentioned were surely sufficient, as it was a matter of conscience.

"Listen to me then, my child, and I am sure that I shall be able to keep you. Your letter, eloquent as it was with honesty and sincerity, told me nothing new, nothing that I had not been convinced of for three months. Yes, my dear Paul, you were right; Paris is more complicated than I thought. What I lacked when I arrived here was an honest, disinterested cicerone to put me on my guard against persons and things. I found none but people who wanted to make money out of me. All the degraded scoundrels in the city have left the mud from their boots on my carpets. I was looking at those poor salons of mine just now. They need a good thorough sweeping; and I promise you that they shall have it, *jour de Dieu !* and from no light hand. But I am waiting until I am a deputy. All these rascals are of service to me in my election; and the election is too necessary to me for me to throw away the slightest chance. This is the situation in two words. Not only does the bey not intend to repay the money I loaned him a month ago; he has met my claim with a counter-claim for twenty-four millions, the figure at which he estimates the sums I obtained from his brother. That is infernal robbery, an impudent slander. My fortune is my own, honestly my own. I made it in my dealings as a contractor. I enjoyed Ahmed's favor; he himself furnished me with opportunities for making money. It is very possible that I have screwed the vise a little hard sometimes. But the matter must not be judged with the eyes of a European.

The enormous profits that the Levantines make are a well-known and recognized thing over yonder; they are the ransom of the savages whom we introduce to western comforts. This wretched Hemerlingue, who is suggesting all this persecution of me to the bey, has done very much worse things. But what 's the use of arguing? I am in the wolf's jaws. Pending my appearance to justify myself before his courts — I know all about justice in the Orient — the bey has begun by putting an embargo on all my property, ships, palaces and their contents. The affair has been carried on quite regularly, in pursuance of a decree of the Supreme Council. I can feel the claw of Hemerlingue Junior under it all. If I am chosen deputy, it is all a jest. The Council revokes its decree and my treasures are returned with all sorts of excuses. If I am not elected, I lose everything, sixty, eighty millions, even the possible opportunity of making another fortune; it means ruin, disgrace, the bottomless pit. And now, my son, do you propose to abandon me at such a crisis? Remember that I have nobody in the world but you. My wife? you have seen her, you know how much support, how much good advice she gives her husband. My children? It 's as if I had none. I never see them, they would hardly know me in the street. My ghastly magnificence has made an empty void around me, so far as affections are concerned, has replaced them by shameless selfish interests. I have no one to love but my mother, who is far away, and you, who come to me from my mother.

No, you shall not leave me alone among all the slanders that are crawling around me. It is horrible — if you only knew! At the club, at the theatre, wherever I go, I see Baroness Hemerlingue's little snake's head, I hear the echo of her hissing, I feel the venom of her hatred. Everywhere I am conscious of mocking glances, conversations broken off when I appear, smiles that lie, or kindness in which there is a mingling of pity. And then the defections, the people who move away as if a catastrophe were coming. For instance, here is Felicia Ruys, with my bust just finished, alleging some accident or other as an excuse for not sending it to the Salon. I said nothing, I pretended to believe it. But I understood that there was some infamy on foot in that quarter, too, — and it's a great disappointment to me. In emergencies as grave as that I am passing through, everything has its importance. My bust at the Exhibition, signed by that famous name, would have been of great benefit to me in Paris. But no, everything is breaking, everything is failing me. Surely you see that you must not fail me."

END OF VOL. I.



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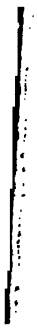

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